# THE DESERTED YACHT

BY ANN WIRT

# The Madge Sterling Series

## BY ANN WIRT

Madge Sterling, is an out-of-doors girl with a keen, alert mind, who finds her talent for solving baffling mysteries put to the test.

Aided by Jack French, a young forest ranger, Madge and her orphan friend, Anne Fairaday, trace down many a hidden clue—in their search for a valuable formula which has been cunningly secreted by a famous chemist.

Each story in the Madge Sterling series is an exciting tale of adventure and mystery.

**The Missing Formula**
**The Deserted Yacht**
**The Secret of the Sundial**

# The Girl Flyers Series

## BY BESS MOYER

Terry and Prim are two high spirited and adventurous girls, who have been taught to fly by their father.

Their two friends Allan and Sidney start to hop across the Atlantic in their plane "Fleet-wings." The next day they are missing. They have not arrived at Harbor Grace in Newfoundland and the girls set out in their plane "Sky Bird" to find them. Bud Hyslop and Joe Arnold are unscrupulous and cause Terry and Prim many worries and exciting experiences.

**Gypsies of the Air**

**On Adventure Island**

# Books for Girls

## • THE GIRL FLYER SERIES

*By Bess Moyer*

Dick Mapes, an airmail pilot and owner of a flying field, is the father of two high spirited and adventurous girls, Terry and Prim, who go in for all outdoor sports; especially flying.

Their adventures in the air, their experiences in helping to solve mysteries that are everyday occurrences of a modern flying field, will be extremely interesting to any real girl.

GYPSIES OF THE AIR
ON ADVENTURE ISLAND

## • THE MADGE STERLING SERIES

*By Ann Wirt*

Madge Sterling is an out-of-doors girl with a keen, alert mind, who finds her talent for solving baffling mysteries put to test.

Each story in this series is an exciting tale of adventure and mystery that will keep the reader guessing. The element of suspense is added to make the wholesome stories thoroughly enjoyable reading.

THE MISSING FORMULA
THE DESERTED YACHT
THE SECRET OF THE SUN DIAL

THE GOLDSMITH PUBLISHING COMPANY
New York, N. Y.

THE DESERTED YACHT

BY ANN WIRT

THE MADGE STERLING SERIES

GOLDSMITH

# The Deserted Yacht

ANN WIRT

GOLDSMITH

# THE DESERTED YACHT

ANN WIRT

*The Madge Sterling Series*

# *THE DESERTED YACHT*

# The Deserted Yacht

*By*

ANN WIRT

*The Madge Sterling Series*

THE GOLDSMITH PUBLISHING COMPANY
NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1932
THE GOLDSMITH PUBLISHING COMPANY
Made in U. S. A.

## CONTENTS


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I | A Strange Reception | 11 |
| II | An Unwilling Boatman | 18 |
| III | The Abandoned Yacht | 24 |
| IV | Enid's Story | 30 |
| V | A Puzzling Case | 35 |
| VI | A Midnight Visitor | 44 |
| VII | A Motor Boat Chase | 51 |
| VIII | An Important Communication | 58 |
| IX | A Jade Pin | 65 |
| X | Uninvited Visitors | 73 |
| XI | The Zudi Drum | 81 |
| XII | An Unusual History | 87 |
| XIII | A Clever Substitute | 94 |
| XIV | A Call for Aid | 103 |
| XV | Rescue | 115 |

# THE DESERTED YACHT

## CHAPTER I

### *A Strange Reception*

A YOUNG girl in a neat traveling suit of dark blue, alighted from the last car of the long train which had pulled into the Cheltham Bay station and with eager eyes surveyed the crowded platform.

"Expectin' someone to meet you, Miss?" the colored porter inquired politely.

"Why, yes, I was," Madge Sterling returned, a perplexed frown puckering her eyebrows. "Just set the suitcase down anywhere here. My friends will surely come in a few minutes."

With profuse thanks, the porter pocketed the coin she gave him and swung back into his car. Madge looked anxiously about. On all sides persons were hurrying up to greet friends who had arrived on the train, but no one appeared to be searching for her.

"Strange Enid didn't meet me or at least send word," she thought. "I do hope I've made no mistake about the time."

To make sure, she opened her purse and looked

again at the letter which she very nearly knew by heart. She had made no error. Enid Burnett had stated very clearly that she would be on hand when the ten-fifteen train arrived.

"It will be more convenient to meet you at Cheltham Bay than any other place," she had written in a bold scrawl. "From the station we'll go directly to our yacht, *The Flora* which will be anchored in the harbor. Father will have everything in readiness for the trip, so the instant you set foot on deck, we'll sail. Here's to two glorious weeks on the water!"

Madge folded the letter and laid it away. There was nothing to do but wait. Undoubtedly, Enid had only been delayed.

She watched the heavy train move slowly from the station. The crowd on the platform rapidly thinned and soon she alone remained. After a little, she picked up her suitcase and carried it to the waiting room, stationing herself near a window where she could see all automobiles driving in and out of the railway yard.

"I can't imagine what is keeping Enid," she thought anxiously. "It looks as though I may be stranded here."

It occurred to her that her friend might have dispatched the invitation upon the impulse of the moment, and then, in the rush of social affairs

which always engulfed her, forgotten about it. Enid was generous to a fault but she was apt to be careless too. In school she had been known to make rash promises which she promptly forgot.

"If I've traveled all the way from Loon Lake, Canada, to participate in a mythical yacht cruise, I'll never forgive her," Madge assured herself.

Time dragged slowly. She made innumerable trips to the water fountain, she experimented with the gum machine and even tried to interest herself in a magazine. At length, after more than an hour had passed, she arose impatiently.

"I don't believe she's coming," she decided. "There's no sense in waiting here forever."

After a brief debate, she walked over to an information window.

"I know this isn't in your line," she said apologetically to the young man in charge, "but I'm trying to locate a party by the name of Burnett. You're not acquainted with anyone by that name?"

"You don't mean Frank Burnett, the yachtsman?"

Madge nodded eagerly.

"I can't say I know him," the other informed, "but I did see by the paper that this yacht had dropped anchor in the bay. It came in yesterday, I believe."

This information left Madge more puzzled than

before. If *The Flora* had arrived at Cheltham Bay, she could think of no reason for Enid's failure to meet her.

"If you want to get out to the yacht, you likely can find some boatman at the dock who will row you over," the clerk advised.

Madge thanked him and turned away. She scarcely knew what to do. It would prove embarrassing to go alone to the Burnett yacht, and yet, surely they were expecting her. After traveling so many miles it would be foolish to return home without making an attempt to see her friend. It was barely possible that an accident had delayed Enid.

"I may as well try to locate the yacht," she decided.

She carried her suitcase outside and a taxi driver immediately came to her assistance. Directing him to take her to the wharf, she sank wearily against the cushions, scarcely troubling herself to gaze at the tall office buildings which whizzed by on either side as the cab rattled over the rough pavement. A short drive carried her within sight of the bay and only then did she lean forward in her seat to obtain a better view.

The taxi halted near the wharf and the driver swung open the car door. Madge alighted and paid her fare.

"Can you tell me which yacht is *The Flora?*" she inquired.

"She lies yonder." The driver indicated a vessel anchored out some distance in the bay.

At sight of the trim little yacht with its gay flags fluttering in the off shore breeze, Madge's spirits arose. It was good to be near the water again. And a two weeks' sailing trip would be such glorious fun!

She looked about for someone to row her out to the yacht. The wharf appeared deserted, for the hour approached noon. After walking a short distance along the water front, her attention was attracted to a man who sat hunched over in a boat that was tied to the dock. His lunch was spread out on the seat before him, but his real interest seemed to center upon something out in the bay. Following his gaze, Madge saw that he was intently watching *The Flora.*

"He must have a boat to rent," she reasoned. "I'll see if I can bargain with him."

She approached closer and addressed him. Startled, the man turned sharply and stared.

Instantly, Madge regretted that she had spoken for the boatman was not at all to her liking. He was dressed in dirty white duck trousers and a grimy shirt, but it was his face rather than his clothing that repulsed her. She saw at once that

he was of foreign extraction, though she could not have guessed his nationality. His complexion was extremely dark and his straight black hair had not been cut in many weeks. His eyes bore into her with disconcerting intensity.

"I beg your pardon, do you have a boat to rent?" she questioned.

He continued to stare until she thought he would never reply. Then touching his cap, he muttered something, speaking with such an accent that she could scarcely make it out.

"Three dolla' an hour," he added indifferently.

"I didn't want to buy the boat," Madge smiled. "Perhaps I failed to understand correctly. You said—"

"Three dolla' an hour," he repeated, scowling darkly.

"Why, that's unreasonable. At my Uncle George's fishing lodge in Canada we rent out boats for all day at less than that."

The boatman shrugged indifferently and Madge thought for an instant that an expression of relief actually crossed his face.

"That my price," he insisted. "Maybe you find another boat."

Madge looked up and down shore but there was no other boat to be had. She realized full well that she was being outrageously over-charged, but

she was eager to reach the Burnett yacht without delay.

"I'll rent your boat," she decided. "It won't take more than half an hour to get where I'm going."

"Three dolla' minimum charge," the boatman announced impressively.

"Are you trying to discourage me?" Madge demanded suspiciously. "I don't believe you're very anxious to rent your boat." Without giving him an opportunity to reply, she took a small roll of bills from her pocketbook and handed him three. "Here's your pay in advance."

He accepted the money with obvious unwillingness and lifted her suitcase into the boat. She seated herself and he cast off the painter.

"Take me to *The Flora,*" she directed. "See, it's that yacht this side of the buoy."

Madge was unprepared for the effect her words produced upon the man. He turned quickly, his eyes smoldering. An expression she could not fathom, flashed over his face.

"I not take you there!" he uttered vehemently, thrusting the three bills rudely toward her. "Here, take your money! You mus' get another boat!"

## CHAPTER II

### *An Unwilling Boatman*

MADGE was taken aback at the boatman's unexpected announcement but she had no intention of being diverted from her original plan. His very reluctance only whetted her determination to hold him to his bargain.

"Keep the money," she insisted. "You made the agreement and you must stand by it. Why do you object to taking me to the Burnett yacht?"

The man muttered something about "a bad omen" which she failed to understand.

"Come, don't try to tell me there's any silly superstition about that boat," she declared impatiently. "Will you take me there or must I call the authorities?"

At mention of the police, the man grew even more agitated. He looked first toward *The Flora* and then at Madge. After a moment's indecision, he picked up the oars and without a word, rowed away from the dock.

It struck Madge that she might be doing a foolish thing to trust herself to a strange boatman,

particularly one who acted so queerly. However, she felt there was no real danger as long as they were within sight of other boats anchored in the bay.

Madge had never been one to forego an adventure for the sake of caution. Perhaps her life in the north woods had taught her resourcefulness and courage. At any rate, since the death of her mother and the strange disappearance of her father, she had learned to look out for herself. Since childhood she had made her home with her Uncle George and Aunt Maude Brady, and many pleasant summers had been spent at their fishing lodge on Loon Lake, Canada. There she had made friends with Anne Fairaday, an orphan living at Stewart Island. This acquaintance had plunged her into an exciting hunt for a hidden paper, the story of which is related in the first volume of the Madge Sterling series, entitled, "The Missing Formula."

At Loon Lake she had met Jack French, a handsome young forest ranger, who, in taking leave of her on the eve of her trip to Cheltham Bay, had warned her that before the summer ended she might see him again.

Madge had been elated at the thought of spending a vacation aboard the Burnett yacht. Enid was the daughter of a noted sportsman and col-

lector of antiques, and since the death of her mother had been permitted to grow up much as she pleased. Notwithstanding, she was a cheerful, friendly sort of girl, not in the least spoiled.

During the tedious trip across the bay, Madge had ample opportunity to study the face of her boatman. He avoided her glance, yet when she looked away, she could feel his eyes upon her.

"He must be a Hindu," she thought uncomfortably. "At least, I'm sure he's from India."

Although the man was dressed in cheap, rough clothing, he did not appear to be a suitable type for the occupation he had chosen. His hands were not those of one who worked at hard labor. Madge noticed too that he wore an expensive looking jade pin, fastened over his breast.

"There's something wrong with the picture," she meditated. "He must have seen better days—or else he stole that pin!"

She wished anew that she was safely aboard *The Flora*. The yacht was still a considerable distance away, too far for her to see anyone on deck.

"Why doesn't he row faster?" she asked herself impatiently. "We'll never get there at this rate."

At her suggestion to the effect, the boatman only stared uncomprehendingly until she gave up trying to make him understand.

"He knows what I want but he's stubborn," she decided. "What ails him anyway? I'm certainly paying him enough for his work."

She longed to take over the oars and show him how to row a boat. Instead, she reconciled herself to a slow trip under the broiling noonday sun and tried to become interested in a small sailboat which was tacking in toward the harbor.

At length, they drew near *The Flora,* approaching from the port side. Madge scanned the railing for a glimpse of her friends. The decks appeared deserted.

"Where is everyone?" she asked in surprise.

The boatman rowed alongside of the yacht and she grasped a trailing rope.

"Hallo, aboard!" she called out.

There was no answer. "You see," the boatman muttered. "No one aboard. We go back."

"Not yet, we don't," Madge corrected. "There must be someone here." She glanced at her wrist watch and saw that it was twelve-fifteen. "Probably everyone is eating luncheon in the cabin."

She shouted again but as there was no reply, indicated to her boatman that she wanted him to row around the yacht until they came to a rope ladder which hung down over the side.

"Do you mind climbing up to see if anyone is aboard?" she asked.

The boatman rewarded her with another blank stare.

"He understands perfectly," Madge thought irritably. "Oh, well, I see I either must argue until I'm black in the face or do it myself."

Instructing the boatman to wait for her, she grasped the rope and began the ascent. The ladder weaved back and forth as the vessel rolled gently in the waves but Madge was not afraid of falling.

"I feel like a monkey in the zoo," she chuckled. "Such a dignified way to arrive!"

She reached the deck and looked about. Everything was in order but there was no sign of activity. It struck her as peculiar that no sailors were on duty, although she knew that Mr. Burnett employed only a few men. Everything was strangely quiet.

"It begins to look as though I'm not expected," she told herself. "Of course, Enid and her Father may have gone to the station after I left. That would account for their absence. I hope I didn't miss them."

She wandered around to the opposite side of the yacht and paused before a door which led down into the dining salon. It was half ajar and as she opened it wider she saw that the salon was empty.

"Not a sign of the cook or anyone," she re-

flected. "This is what I call an enthusiastic welcome! And I'm half starved too!"

Passing a stateroom, Madge thought she heard a slight sound from within. She knocked loudly upon the closed door. There was no response.

She turned away, only to pause and retrace her steps. A queer intuitive feeling had taken possession of her—a conviction that all was not as it should be aboard the yacht.

She hesitated before the door, scarcely knowing whether or not it was her business to investigate. Then with sudden decision, she grasped the knob and turned it.

The sight that greeted Madge's eyes left her startled and dumbfounded.

"Oh," she gasped. "What dreadful thing has happened?"

## CHAPTER III

### *The Abandoned Yacht*

THE door had swung back to reveal a wrecked stateroom. Everything was in confusion. Chairs were upset, papers strewn over the floor and a table lamp had toppled to the floor. Obviously, the room had been occupied by Mr. Burnett, for his clothing hung on nails along the wall, but there was no sign of the noted yachtsman. The bed had not been slept in on the previous night.

Madge was thoroughly alarmed. It was immediately apparent to her that something was radically wrong. She saw clearly that there had been a struggle, and from the condition of the furniture and fixtures, it had been a desperate one. What had become of Mr. Burnett and Enid?

"It's a case for the police," she decided instantly. "I must return to the city as quickly as I can and bring someone here!"

Closing the door behind her, she ran back to the railing. Peering down, she searched in vain for her boatman. Her eyes turned shoreward and she saw him several hundred yards away, rowing hurriedly toward the harbor.

"Come back!" she called frantically. "I want to go with you!"

She shouted until she was nearly hoarse, but the boatman gave no indication that he heard. He kept his face lowered and not once did he glance back toward the yacht.

"Now what shall I do?" Madge asked herself in desperation. "I believe that man left me stranded here on purpose! Oh, I could scalp him!"

She gazed resentfully after the retreating boatman, observing that he made far greater speed than on the trip out to the yacht. Not for a moment did she believe he had mistaken her order to wait.

She consoled herself with the thought that she would have him arrested for carrying away her luggage. However, unobserved by her, the boatman had brought the suitcase aboard. She saw it on the deck as she turned around.

"He came aboard quickly enough when he wanted to!" she exclaimed. "I wonder why he ran away? Perhaps he had a suspicion that something was wrong here."

She recalled his reluctance to rent his boat and his unwillingness to make the trip to *The Flora.* Having taken an instant dislike to him, she decided without further consideration, that he was a ques-

tionable character and would bear investigation. She determined to speak of him when she acquainted the authorities with the situation as she had found it aboard the yacht.

For the present, her one desire was to reach shore as quickly as possible. She gazed anxiously about for help. Several small boats were plying in and out of the harbor, but they were too far away to be of aid. As if by a preconceived plan, they kept beyond hailing distance.

"It looks as though I'll be here for some time," Madge commented inwardly. "Oh, dear, and it's so important that I notify the police without delay. Something dreadful may have happened to Enid and her father."

Since it availed her nothing to stand helplessly by the railing, she decided to look about the ship more carefully and see if she could make further discoveries. It was difficult for her to believe that the yacht had been entirely abandoned.

After visiting the kitchen and the lounge, she noticed a second cabin not far from the one occupied by Mr. Burnett. The door was unlocked and she entered, half expecting to find everything in disorder.

She found herself in Enid's room. Nothing seemed to have been disturbed. Toilet articles were neatly arranged on the dressing table, and in open-

ing a closet door, Madge saw a long line of pretty frocks. An empty traveling bag occupied the shelf above.

"Enid couldn't have gone away for the week-end or she would have taken her things," she reasoned.

Only the bed gave evidence that the room had been occupied within the past twenty-four hours. The sheets were wrinkled and the blankets lay upon the floor, as though the occupant had tossed them hurriedly aside upon arising.

"It's beyond me," Madge mused. "Evidently, Enid slept here last night—or at least a portion of the night, but Mr. Burnett didn't."

In her mind, the conviction was steadily growing that her friends had met with violence. She had read that robberies were not an infrequent occurrence aboard luxurious yachts, and Mr. Burnett was known to have valuables and art treasures in his possession.

Sorely troubled, she returned to the upper deck to watch for a boat, but as there was none close by, she wandered restlessly about.

"It's odd what became of all the sailors," she thought. "Surely someone would be here to tell the story, even if there had been a robbery. It's the most mysterious thing I ever encountered."

Presently, she reentered Mr. Burnett's cabin

to look again for clues. Crossing to the desk, she jerked open a drawer. To her astonishment, she saw, tucked beneath some papers, a leather bill-fold. A glance disclosed that it contained two twenty dollar bills.

"This doesn't look like robbery after all," Madge told herself. "I don't know what to make of it now."

She was even more puzzled when she entered the bathroom adjoining the cabin and found a silver watch lying upon the shelf above the wash bowl. She was still examining it when she became aware of a slight scraping sound in the bedroom. At first she thought she must be mistaken, but as she heard it again, she hastily retraced her steps.

All was quiet in the stateroom. Madge looked about but could see no cause for the strange sound. She was about to turn away when it was repeated, and this time she distinctly traced it to a closet on the opposite side of the room.

"There's some one in there!" she thought in excitement.

She ran to the door and tried to jerk it open. It was locked.

As she moved the handle, she heard the same scraping noise, louder than before. Now she knew that someone was imprisoned within and

pulled frantically at the knob. Realizing that she was only wasting her strength, she looked about the room for some object with which to break the lock. Instead, her eye fell upon a key that lay on the carpet at her feet. Evidently, it had fallen from the door or had been dropped purposely.

With nervous fingers she fitted it into the lock. It refused to turn. She worked with it and after several attempts, was rewarded by a sharp click.

She jerked open the door and stepped back in amazement and horror. There at her feet, bound and gagged, lay Enid.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Enid's Story*

THE girl on the floor rolled over and groaned. She raised her head and tried to speak, but only succeeded in making choking noises in her throat.

"Oh, you poor thing!" Madge cried, trying to lift her up. "I'll have you free in just a minute. Who left you here like this?"

Realizing that her friend could not reply, she quickly slipped the gag from her mouth. Even then, Enid made no attempt to speak other than to murmur an incoherent, "thank goodness." She leaned weakly against the wall and watched as Madge tried to release the ropes which bound her.

"There's a pen knife—in the desk," she managed, but the effort left her spent.

Madge failed to find it, but flew to the kitchen where she did locate a sharp paring knife. Quickly, she severed the ropes and helped Enid to her feet. She could not stand alone for her limbs were temporarily paralyzed from being too long in a cramped position. Madge supported her and half carried her to the bed.

"Water," the girl pleaded.

Madge ran again to the kitchen, returning with a pitcher filled with water. Enid gulped down one glass and would have drunk another had not Madge thought it best to restrain her. She was shocked at the girl's appearance. Her face was streaked from tears, and deathly white. Her parched lips were twisted as though from pain. The white silk dress she wore, had been torn in several places. Her reddish brown hair, usually so nicely groomed, hung in wisps about her face.

"I'll be all right in a little while," she insisted. "I feel better now."

Madge had noticed that Enid's wrists and ankles were swollen and bruised from the ropes so she searched the bathroom for bandage material. As she poured iodine into the cuts, her patient showed the first signs of returning vivacity.

"Good grief, Madge! Have a heart!"

"Stop wriggling, or I'll spill this stuff all over you. I know it hurts."

By the time she had finished bandaging, Enid was more like her old self. Not until then did Madge try to learn what had happened.

"It's too dreadful to tell," Enid murmured brokenly. "Father's been kidnapped!"

"Kidnapped!"

Enid nodded forlornly.

"It happened last night. I've been locked up in that closet ever since. I thought I'd die before someone came!"

"What became of your Father?"

"Oh, Madge, if only I knew! Those horrible men took him away! I'm afraid they've murdered him! I'm afraid—"

"Now, now," Madge comforted, slipping her arm about Enid, "don't take on so. It won't help matters to become hysterical. Try to tell me as calmly as you can just what took place."

Enid made an effort to steady herself. She gripped her friend's hand tightly as she began her story.

"Father and I were alone last night here. We had given the three sailors and our cook forty-eight hours shore leave, for we had decided not to sail until tomorrow morning. Father had gone to his cabin to read. I idled about the deck for an hour or so. It was after eleven when I finally went to bed." She paused and seemed to lose herself in unpleasant thoughts.

"Go on," Madge urged gently.

"It was sometime later—I'm not just sure what time it was, when I was awakened. I heard a boat grate against the side of the yacht and then someone called out. Father answered but I couldn't make out what he said. However, I gathered that

some men wanted to speak to him in the cabin."

"You don't know who they were?"

"No, they must have given their names, but I couldn't hear well enough through the porthole. At any rate, they seemed to have convinced Father that they were all right, for after some discussion, he permitted them to come aboard.

"I don't know why I didn't go back to sleep. I had a queer feeling that I can't explain. I sensed that something was wrong. After a minute or so I got up and opened the door. I couldn't hear a sound in Father's cabin. I decided to dress."

"You turned on the light?" Madge inquired.

"No, I didn't, and I made as little noise as possible, although up until then I really had no reason to be afraid. It was just a feeling—"

"I understand. Then what happened?"

"I had just finished dressing when I heard a commotion in Father's cabin. It sounded as though they were throwing the furniture around. I ran there as fast as I could. As I threw open the door I saw that two men were trying to overpower Father. He was fighting desperately, holding them at bay with a chair. I screamed and just then the light was extinguished."

"That was the last you recall?"

"Very nearly. I do remember that Father shouted for me to get away. But before I could

act, something struck me on the back of the head." Enid raised her hand and tenderly felt the bump. "I didn't know anything more for several hours. When I came to, I found myself in that closet, bound and gagged. I've been there ever since."

"It was horrible of them to leave you like that," Madge declared angrily. "Why, you might have suffocated. Or starved to death!"

"I did think I'd die before help came," Enid confessed with a wry smile. "I really don't believe those men would have cared. They're heartless! That's why I'm so worried about Father. They've taken him away somewhere."

"We must get the police after them instantly. Is there any way we can reach shore?"

"Why, yes, we have a motor boat. If you'll help me now I think I can walk."

"Don't you want something to eat first? You're not very strong."

Enid shook her head.

"No, I'll not feel like eating until I know the police are on the trail of those men."

She insisted that they start at once, and with Madge supporting her, managed to reach the deck. Peering down over the railing she uttered a startled cry.

"What's the matter?" Madge asked.

"The motor boat! It's gone! Someone has cut it from its moorings!"

## CHAPTER V

### *A Puzzling Case*

BOTH girls could plainly see where the motor boat had been tied. Only a stub end of rope remained.

"Those kidnappers must have cut it loose last night when they carried Father off!" Enid cried. "Now how are we to get ashore?"

"We might swim," Madge suggested seriously, measuring with her eye the distance to the wharf. "I think I could make it."

"Well, I couldn't, and anyway, I have a better idea."

Enid brought out a distress flag which had been stored away and hung it where it would be seen by a passing ship. While they awaited rescue, Madge prepared food from the generous assortment of tin goods she found in the kitchen. Enid was induced to eat. The food seemed to revive her and she declared it was the most delicious she had ever tasted. The color gradually flooded back into her cheeks.

Madge asked a great many questions and in

turn related her experience with the boatman. She was a trifle disappointed when the matter was passed off lightly.

"So many longshore-men and waterfront derelicts are like that," Enid told her. "You can't trust some of them out of your sight. It's a wonder he didn't run off with your suitcase."

The girls maintained a faithful watch but no ships passed near the yacht. They were about to despair when Madge noticed a black and red amphibian taxiing toward shore.

"Oh, I hope the pilot sees our signal!" she exclaimed. "He's not looking this way."

Frantically, they waved their hands to attract his attention. They feared they had failed, for the plane maintained its course. Then suddenly it swerved and the pilot returned their greeting.

"Why, it's Rex Stewart!" Enid cried, observing the amphibian's wing markings. "And he's coming this way."

Madge did not inquire as to the identity of the young man mentioned, but from the poppy color which swiftly mounted Enid's cheeks, she surmised that he was a very special friend.

Rex Stewart had known and admired Enid for many years. He was the son of a prominent, ultra-conservative Cheltham Bay lawyer but had inherited none of his father's staid viewpoints. It

was the private opinion of the Stewart family that he was too reckless, and far too interested in aviation for his own good. Rex liked fast horses and speedy motorboats; he owned his own amphibian and was an excellent pilot. He made friends easily and kept them. And, rather to the surprise of everyone, he stood high in the sophomore class of Ardmore College.

The plane continued toward the yacht, slackening its speed as it approached. While still far enough away to be in no danger of crashing the propeller or wings against the side of the ship, Rex idled the engine, allowing the plane to drift.

"Anything wrong?" he called out.

Trying to make themselves heard above the roar of the engine, Madge and Enid finally succeeded in conveying the idea that they wished to be taken ashore.

"I don't see how he'll ever get us aboard," Enid said despairingly. "I'll tell him to go on in and send a boat back after us."

She shouted the message across the water, but Rex was unwilling to leave. Deliberately, taking every precaution, he edged the amphibian in close to the yacht. Anxiously the girls watched him maneuver. The bay was unusually quiet and Rex maintained perfect control, yet they realized that the slightest miscalculation of distance or an un-

expected roll of the yacht might result in a crumpled wing.

As he succeeded in making contact, the girls hastily lowered themselves into the front cockpit. Madge obtained only a fleeting impression of the young pilot's face, for it was half-masked with goggles and helmet. He was not handsome but his eyes were friendly and there was a quality about him that was most likable.

"You shouldn't have risked your plane to take us off," Enid protested after she had introduced Madge.

"I knew what I was about," Rex returned, smiling broadly. "Sit tight now and we'll run in to the beach."

He opened the throttle and the amphibian skimmed lightly over the water. In a few minutes they drew near the shore where a flagman signalled them in. Rex beached the plane and aided the girls in alighting.

"Now tell me what's wrong," he commanded.

Enid poured out her story with Madge adding additional details. Rex listened in amazement, and when they had finished promptly agreed that the wisest thing was to notify the authorities without delay.

"It doesn't sound like an ordinary case of kidnapping to me," he declared, and then as Enid's

face grew even more distressed, he added quickly: "Don't worry. The police will find your father."

"If it's a case of money, I can arrange with Father's banker," Enid returned earnestly. "I'll give any amount they say—anything to secure his release."

"Don't do anything rash," Rex advised. "Better let the police deal with those men. You know how your father is too, Enid. He'd never give in an inch."

"No, I realize Father would never allow himself to be ransomed if he could help it. That's what may make it so hard. He'll defy those men and refuse to communicate with me. They may do terrible things to him."

"Don't think about it," Rex admonished, taking her arm and steering her toward the roadside. "I'll go with you to the police."

He helped the girls into a taxicab and during the ride to the police headquarters, did his best to cheer Enid. She leaned her head back against the cushion and scarcely spoke.

"You really believe the police can find him?" she murmured once.

"Why, of course," Rex assured her heartily, but over her head he shot Madge a glance which told her that he considered the situation more serious than his words indicated.

At the police station, the girls were asked a great many questions but Rex made everything easy for them. He knew several policemen and it was largely due to his efforts that one of the best detectives on the force, a man by the name of Randall, was assigned the case.

They all drove to the beach in a police car and Rex made two trips to the yacht in his amphibian. Randall and another detective who accompanied him, were conducted to Mr. Burnett's stateroom which the girls had left undisturbed. The two men looked about but at the end of their investigation admitted they had found no new clues.

"It may have been an inside job," Randall said to Enid. "How many men does your father employ?"

"Three sailors and a cook. He does his own piloting."

"And you say that last night when the kidnapping occurred, you and your father were alone."

"Why, yes, Father had given our employes forty-eight hours shore leave."

"Wasn't that rather unusual?"

"No, we frequently stay here alone," Enid declared. "All of the men but one live at Cheltham Bay and whenever we anchor Father usually gives them a day or so off duty."

The detective digested this information in si-

lence. He conferred with his companion and then questioned Enid again.

"Did your father keep large sums of money or valuables aboard?"

"Not to my knowledge. He was always afraid of being robbed."

"Have you heard him express any such fear recently, Miss Burnett?"

"N-o." Enid hesitated and then went on: "But I will say he hasn't acted exactly like himself the past month."

"In what way do you mean?"

"Well, for one thing he purchased a revolver. He seemed to be afraid of something. I can't say what it was. He always laughed when I asked questions."

"H-m," the detective meditated. "And where did he keep the revolver?"

"It was in the desk."

"It's not there now," Randall informed. "You heard no shots fired, Miss Burnett?"

"Oh, no. Only the struggle as I told you."

"It's possible your father recognized his assailants and in self-protection they were forced to kidnap him," Randall suggested thoughtfully. "Their real motive may have been robbery."

"Then why didn't they take Mr. Burnett's pocketbook?" Madge asked pointedly.

"They may have overlooked it."

Madge made no reply although she took scant stock in such a theory. It seemed to her that the detectives were conducting only a routine investigation, that their interest in the case was only perfunctory. And Mr. Randall's next words deepened this impression.

"There's no need to worry, Miss Burnett. We'll find your father but it may take time. If it's a case of kidnapping for ransom, you're sure to hear within a few days at most. In the meantime, we'll do all we can, and keep in close touch with you."

Rex carried the detectives back to the mainland after they had completed their investigation and then returned to *The Flora*. He found Enid sadly in need of someone to cheer her.

"I don't know how I'll stand it," she declared unhappily. "I'll go crazy just sitting and waiting. If only I could do something!"

Rex and Madge exchanged quick, significant glances. They had both been disappointed at the outcome of the police investigation. They realized far better than did Enid, that it might be a long wait indeed before word was received from Mr. Burnett.

"We will do something," Madge said quietly, slipping her arm protectingly about her friend's

shoulders. "I don't know how, but someway we'll manage to trace your father! And when we find him I think the police will learn that it isn't a case of ordinary kidnapping!"

## CHAPTER VI

### *A Midnight Visitor*

REX soon took leave of the girls, saying that he intended to return to the police station for another talk with the authorities, and then go in search of the Burnett motor boat which had been cut loose from *The Flora.*

"I can't thank you enough for all the trouble you're taking," Enid told him gratefully.

"Don't thank me until I really help you," he returned. "I probably won't find the boat for those men may have stolen it instead of cutting it adrift."

After Rex had gone there was little for the girls to do. Madge thought it best that they leave Mr. Burnett's room untouched lest the police wish to examine it again and Enid had no desire to put the cabin to rights. She paced nervously up and down deck, avoiding that section of the yacht. Madge begged her to lie down for a few hours and she reluctantly went to her own cabin. After a time she fell into a troubled sleep and did not awaken until her chum shook her gently.

"Wake up, Enid. Rex is here and he's found the motor boat."

Enid hastily straightened her rumpled hair and hurried out upon deck. Rex already had come aboard after tying up the recovered boat.

"Where did you find it?" Enid questioned eagerly.

"Out near Culver's Island. I figured that if it had been left to drift, the current would carry it that way. I cruised around in my amphibian until I sighted it and then notified the Coast Guard. By the time I had gone home for my own motor boat they had recovered it, so I merely towed it out here."

"Did you examine it for possible clues?" Madge inquired.

"Yes, I looked it over. If those kidnappers used the boat they were smart enough not to leave any thing behind that would identify them. However, it's my guess they made their get-away in their own boat and merely cut this one adrift as an additional precaution against being followed."

"I don't see how they figured I could follow them when I was tied hand and foot and locked in that stifling closet," Enid said bitterly, "and to know that Father is in their power! They may mistreat him!"

"Not if they are after a large ransom," Rex suggested, in an effort to cheer her. "You may be sure of that."

"The police said probably we would receive some communication within twenty-four hours," Enid declared, more hopefully. "I wonder how much they'll want?"

Rex met Madge's eyes and he read the thought that had flashed through her mind. She had begun to wonder if a communication ever would be received. From the first, it had seemed unlikely to her that the kidnapping had been committed for the sole purpose of securing ransom. She felt there might be a more sinister motive behind the crime.

Before the conversation could be resumed, the sound of a boat grating against the side of the yacht, drew the trio to the railing. Unobserved by them, a craft had made fast to the yacht, and now they saw they were to entertain representatives of the press. The reporters swarmed aboard without waiting for an invitation, bombarding the girls with terse questions. A photographer insisted upon taking their pictures. Likewise, he photographed the yacht and Mr. Burnett's cabin. Only the arrival of a second boat, containing Mr. Randall and two other detectives, brought the ordeal to an end.

"Have you learned anything new?" Enid inquired hopefully of Mr. Randall, after the reporters had gone.

"We're making progress," he informed. "Your father's description has been broadcast over the radio and the police tela-types. I've brought some pictures from the Rogues Gallery that I want you to try to identify."

For the next fifteen minutes Enid studied photographs of noted criminals known to have records for kidnapping, but as each was presented to her, she only shook her head.

"I'm afraid I can't be of much help. You see, I caught such a fleeting glance of the two men."

After the detective had returned to shore somewhat disappointed at her failure to identify any of the photographs, Rex said that he too must leave.

"Surely, you girls aren't intending to stay here alone tonight?" he inquired.

Enid and Madge had made no plans but now that they considered it, they were reluctant to leave the yacht. Rex suggested that his mother would be pleased to have them stay at the Stewart home, but the girls felt they could not accept.

"We might possibly get word from father during the night," Enid explained, "and anyway, the cook and our sailors will be coming back early

in the morning. I must be here to tell them what has happened."

"I wish you had asked for a police guard," Rex returned with a troubled frown. "I don't like the idea of you staying here alone."

"We're not cut off from the mainland now that we have the motor boat," Madge pointed out. "Honestly, we're not a bit afraid."

In the end they persuaded him to their way of thinking, but as he left, he announced that he intended to keep watch of the yacht during the early part of the night.

As it grew dusk, Madge prepared supper. Enid tried to help but could not keep her mind on what she was doing. After wiping the dishes, they wrapped themselves in steamer rugs and sat out on deck. For a long time they watched the twinkling shore lights. Once they heard the drone of an airplane overhead and imagined that it might be Rex.

In spite of their declaration to the contrary, the girls were not entirely easy in their minds. The very quiet of the yacht was disturbing. The night had closed in dark and threatening; black shadows lurked everywhere.

At ten o'clock they decided to turn in. Enid was so tired and worn out that she dropped asleep almost at once. Madge rolled and tossed for the

better part of an hour. At last, she too dozed off.

She had no way of knowing how long she slept, but suddenly she found herself sitting upright in bed. What had awakened her? She glanced at her companion. Enid was sleeping peacefully.

After a moment, she sank back against the pillows, but scarcely had her eyes closed than she was startled by a peculiar sound. A boat was scraping against the side of the yacht!

Cold shivers ran over her body and she resisted the temptation to burrow down beneath the blankets.

"Enid, wake up!" she whispered, shaking her chum roughly by the arm.

Enid stirred and as she was shaken again, opened her eyes.

"What's the matter?" she murmured drowsily.

"Hush!" Madge warned in an undertone. There was no need to say more for by this time Enid had fully awakened.

Both girls listened intently. Footsteps could be heard plainly on the deck. Someone had boarded the boat!

"Perhaps it's one of the sailors," Enid whispered, but her voice quavered.

"We must see!" Madge returned. "Come on!"

Enid gripped her hand and tried to hold her back. "Oh, I'm afraid!"

"Then I'll go alone."

But Enid would not stay behind. As Madge quietly slipped out of bed, she was close beside her. Clinging together, they crept to the door and listened. They could hear the footsteps more distinctly now.

Madge opened the cabin door a crack and peered out. At first she saw nothing, then as her eyes became more accustomed to the dark, she beheld the figure of a man. She saw him pause, look searchingly about and then swiftly enter Mr. Burnett's cabin.

For an instant she was too startled to move. Then she whispered into her chum's ear.

"Now is our chance! We must steal out there and lock him in!"

## CHAPTER VII

### *A Motor Boat Chase*

MADGE quietly opened the door and moved stealthily toward Mr. Burnett's cabin. Enid, terrified at the thought of remaining behind, followed.

They stole softly along the deck, every muscle tensed for the unexpected. Madge stepped over a coil of rope in her path and too late turned to warn her chum. Enid failed to see it. She stumbled and fell flat on the deck, letting out a sharp exclamation.

Before she could regain her feet, a figure darted from Mr. Burnett's cabin. He went over the railing like a flash and was lost to view.

"Oh, we mustn't let him get away!" Madge cried.

She jerked Enid to her feet and they reached the railing just in time to see a motor boat speed away from the yacht.

"Enid, can you run your father's motor boat?" she demanded.

"Yes, but——"

"Then come on! Our only chance of tracing your father is to follow this man!"

Rex had filled the tank of the motor boat that afternoon, but it required several minutes before Enid had the engine going. Madge cast off and they moved away from the yacht.

"To the right!" she directed. "I saw him head that way."

Enid swung the wheel and they made for the open water. The boat rapidly gathered speed until the sea split from under her prow in huge waves.

"Can you see him, Madge?"

"Dead ahead. He has the engine muffled."

"Then we'll lose him if we're not careful."

"Can't you go faster?"

Enid shook her head.

For a few minutes longer they kept the boat in sight but it was increasingly apparent that they were running a losing race. The man they were following knew the channels and his boat was fast. Soon he was swallowed by the night.

After it was evident that they had lost him, Enid stopped the engine. They listened for a few minutes but there was no sound of a motor boat.

"I guess we may as well turn back!" Madge said in disgust.

"It was all my fault," Enid grieved. "Of course, I had to stumble over that old rope!"

"It wasn't your fault, honey," Madge comforted. "It was just a bad break of luck."

Enid was silent as they slowly steered back toward *The Flora.* Madge too, was occupied with her own thoughts. She wondered what could be the meaning of the midnight visit. Had the prowler come for the purpose of ransacking the cabin or was it possible that he had brought some message?

The girls were thoroughly chilled by the night air before they reached the yacht. Yet, the adventure had made them far too nervous to even consider going back to bed. After lighting nearly all of the lamps, they screwed up their courage and entered Mr. Burnett's cabin. A hasty glance about assured them that nothing had been touched.

"I guess he didn't have time to do any damage," Enid declared. "What do you suppose brought him here tonight?"

"I wish I knew."

"Well, I think Rex was right about staying here alone. It was a terribly foolish thing to do. I'll not spend another night here without a guard."

After a time they settled themselves in deck chairs, and there, snuggled down under steamer rugs, they spent the remainder of the night. For some reason they felt safer out in the open where they could see any boat that might approach. Occasionally, they dozed off, but for the most part they maintained a vigilant watch.

At dawn they stretched their cramped limbs and went to Enid's cabin to freshen up. Hot coffee revived their spirits and strengthened their morale. As the sun beat down upon the deck it was difficult for them to believe that they had spent such a harrowing night.

"We must report to the police immediately," Madge advised. "They may attach special significance to what happened during the night."

Soon after breakfast, Mr. Burnett's cook and three sailors appeared upon the scene, and after she had given them orders for the day, Enid was ready to leave.

"It's a relief to know someone will be at the yacht while we're gone," she said to Madge as they drove away in the motor boat. "Jose the cook was quite broken up to hear about Father. And the sailors too have always liked him."

At the police station, the girls related the happenings of the night. While the authorities offered no comment other than to ask a few questions, it was plain that the incident puzzled them. Enid had hoped the police would have good news to report, but seemingly, the case was at a standstill.

"There's very little we can do until some communication is received from the kidnappers," Mr. Randall told her. "Rest assured a demand for ransom will be made soon."

"But more than twenty-four hours has elapsed already," Enid protested. "If those men were after money I should have thought they would have left a note behind at the time of the kidnapping."

The girls spent over an hour at the station and left more discouraged than ever. Although Enid was trying desperately to maintain her courage, she was beginning to fear that she might never see her father again.

Before returning to their motor boat they stopped at a street corner to purchase newspapers. The story of the kidnapping had been spread out on the front page in bold print and their own photographs stared them in the face.

"Oh, dear," Enid lamented, "it's dreadful to get you mixed up in this. I invited you here for a pleasant vacation and instead, plunged you into all this publicity."

"I'm here to help," Madge assured her. "If only we had something to work on!"

They walked on to the water front and were just boarding the motor boat when Madge clutched her friend by the arm.

"See that man over there! He's the one I told you about—the boatman who ran away and left me aboard the yacht."

Enid turned to look.

"Oh, I think I've seen him before. I don't know

his name but I'm sure he's all right. He probably didn't understand that you wanted him to wait."

"Just the same, I'd like to talk with him again," Madge said quietly.

They started toward the man but without seeming to observe their approach, he moved swiftly away to lose himself in an alley.

"See that, Enid! He knew we intended to question him!"

"Why, he didn't even see us coming."

"I think he did," Madge insisted. "He pretended not to be looking our way, but all the while he was watching out the corner of his eye. One of these times I'll catch him unaware!"

Since there was slight chance he would return, the girls went back to their boat and soon reached *The Flora*. They were informed by a sailor that during their absence Rex had been there. A number of reporters had called too, but had not been permitted to board the vessel.

"After lunch I must straighten up Father's cabin," Enid remarked to her chum. "I'd do it now only I have a headache. I believe I'll lie down for an hour or so."

After her friend had gone to her room, Madge sat out on deck and tried to read. Soon the magazine fell to her lap and she stared thoughtfully out across the bay. At length she arose.

"I may as well put Mr. Burnett's cabin to rights," she decided. "I know it's a task Enid dreads."

She found the cabin door unlocked and entered. Everything was just as she had discovered it the morning of her arrival at Cheltham Bay. After a preliminary survey, she began at one corner of the room, straightening rugs and rearranging furniture. She picked up newspapers, books and articles which had been hurled to the floor in the desperate struggle.

In righting the objects on the desk, her attention was attracted to a scrap of paper which had fallen to the floor. Madge did not recall having noticed it there before. Thinking that it must have blown from the desk when the door was opened, she bent down and picked it up.

She gave it a casual glance and then stared in blank astonishment.

"Great jumping snakes!" she exclaimed. "Where did this come from?"

With the paper clutched tightly in her hand, she darted out the door and ran toward Enid's cabin.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *An Important Communication*

MADGE flung open the cabin door and burst in upon Enid who was lying upon the bed, though fully awake.

"Look at this!" she cried. "I found it in your father's cabin just now."

"What is it?" Enid demanded, abruptly rising.

"It's a communication from those men who kidnapped your father. Read it!"

Enid snatched at the paper and eagerly scanned the message. It read:

"Deliver the Zudi Drum Bowl on midnight of the 29th at the white birch on Cedar Point if you wish to save your father. Come alone and communicate with no one. If the police learn of this note, your father's life will be the forfeit."

The note was signed with three triangles and a strange symbol, unlike anything the girls had ever seen before.

"How dreadful!" Enid gasped.

"What does it all mean?" Madge demanded. "Did you ever hear of this thing they call the Zudi Drum Bowl?"

Enid nodded soberly. Her face was very white.

"Oh, Madge, I'm afraid we're dealing with a band of the worst sort of criminals," she half whispered. "This isn't an ordinary kidnapping case. It's the Zudi Drum that has caused all the trouble."

"Tell me what it's all about, "Madge commanded. "This note is Greek to me."

"You know Father collects antiques and the like," Enid explained. "He has things from all over the world. The Zudi Drum Bowl is one of his most cherished trophies."

"Just what is it?"

"It's a sort of drum used in former times by a primitive tribe of Indian natives. It looks like a huge jar, elaborately decorated, but the mouth has an overhanging lip so that when a dried skin is stretched over the opening, it can be used as a drum. It was used only for special ceremonial meetings, I believe."

"How did your father get possession of it?"

"It was during our trip to India, two years ago. He purchased it from an antique dealer and paid a steep price for it too."

"If it is so valuable that may explain why the kidnappers are trying to get it."

"The drum would have slight value to anyone not interested in antiques. I can't understand how the news leaked out that it was in Father's possession. He took pains to keep the matter quiet."

"Where is Cedar Point?" Madge questioned next.

"Up the bay about fifty miles, I'd judge. In a most desolate locality."

"You have no intention of going there, of course."

"Oh, but I must!" Enid cried. "It's the only way to save Father. The Zudi Drum is valuable, but I can't consider the cost."

"I was thinking of other things besides the value of the trophy," Madge said slowly. "I was thinking of your own safety. You mustn't go to Cedar Point alone, Enid. Turn the note over to the police. They'll know how to deal with the situation."

"Oh, no, I can't do that! For Father's sake we must obey orders implicitly. I'll give them the Zudi Drum Bowl—anything they ask."

Madge saw that it was useless to argue with Enid in her present distraught state of mind. However, she did not give up the idea of trying to persuade her chum to her way of thinking at a later time. She believed that they were dealing with a clever band of criminals, a group of men who would stop at nothing to further their own

schemes. It seemed to her that if Enid went alone to Cedar Point, she would only invite trouble. Even if the Zudi Drum were turned over to the kidnappers, there was no assurance that Mr. Burnett would be released.

"I wish Jack French were here," she thought, "he would know what to do."

"I'm not sure where the Drum Bowl is," Enid broke in upon her reflection, "but I know it's not here on the yacht. Father must keep it with his other valuables at home. The place has been closed up for weeks."

"But your home is two hundred miles up the coast, Enid."

"I know, I must find some way to get there."

"Today is the twenty-seventh," Madge reminded.

"Perhaps Rex will take me in his amphibian. I'll get there somehow."

Madge made no further attempt to discourage Enid, for she scarcely knew what was the wisest course to follow if they were not to disclose their information to the police. It struck her as most singular that the kidnappers would go to such lengths to secure possession of a trophy which apparently was highly valued only by collectors. She could have understood a demand for a large sum of money but no such request had been made.

"I wonder how the note was left in Father's room?" Enid mused. "I'm sure it wasn't there yesterday."

"No, the detectives surely would have found it for they went over the place with a fine tooth comb."

"I don't see how it could have been left while we were away this morning either," Enid went on reflectively. "With the sailors here, it would have been impossible."

"My guess is that the note was left by last night's prowler."

"We were in the cabin after that."

"Yes, but we didn't really look around much. We were too frightened. And naturally, we never dreamed that he had left a note behind."

Madge was troubled by another thought which she decided not to confide to her chum, lest it worry her unnecessarily. It occurred to her that the kidnappers were in close touch with the situation aboard the yacht, else they could not have known of Enid's release. The note obviously had been addressed to her, though her name had not been mentioned.

"Someone is keeping close watch here," she reflected uncomfortably. "Likely enough, our every action is known."

Enid broke in upon her thoughts to suggest that

they both return to Mr. Burnett's cabin, as she was curious to see exactly where the note had been found. They spent perhaps fifteen minutes in the room, finding no further evidence of the midnight prowler.

"I'll ask the sailors if they permitted any stranger on deck while we were gone this morning," Enid announced, "though I'm confident the note was brought here last night."

She questioned the men in turn, only to learn that Rex had been the sole person to come aboard.

"I hope he comes back before evening," Enid said anxiously. "If he can't take me to my home at Bay City, I must find another means of getting there."

"You're still determined to go through with it?" Madge asked.

"Oh, yes, it's the only way of saving Father."

Madge started to speak, then waited as one of the sailors approached. He paused to address Enid.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Burnett. While I was swabbin' down the deck, I found this here doo-dad. I thought maybe it belonged to you."

He dropped a tiny trinket into her hand and turned away.

"It doesn't belong to me," Enid said. "Have you lost anything, Madge?"

"Why, no, what is it?"

Enid extended the palm of her hand upon which lay a small jade pin.

"I think I've seen that before, or one just like it," Madge said, a queer note in her voice. "Mind if I borrow it for a little while? I may be able to find the owner, and if I do, I'll promise interesting developments!"

## CHAPTER IX

### *A Jade Pin*

"YOU'RE welcome to the pin," Enid declared readily, turning it over to her chum. "It's a curious piece of work. To whom do you think it belongs?"

"Unless I'm very sadly mistaken, I saw a pin like that the day I arrived at Cheltham Bay," Madge responded. "The boatman who brought me out here was wearing it."

Enid could not resist a smile.

"You're bound to connect that poor man with the kidnapping, aren't you, Madge? I'm sure the pin couldn't have been the same. I'm not an expert on stones but this looks expensive to me. What you saw must have been an imitation."

"Possibly," Madge returned, a trifle nettled. "Just the same, if you don't mind, I'd like to keep it for a few days."

"Keep it as long as you like, only I don't see how you hope to trace the owner. If you show it to that boatman he'll claim it whether he's the owner or not."

"I know better than to do that," Madge smiled. "I have another scheme in mind."

Before she could explain, they heard a loud hail from windward and turned to see Rex coming toward the yacht in his motor boat. They returned the greeting and a few minutes later he climbed aboard.

"Any news?" Enid inquired hopefully.

Rex shook his head regretfully.

"That's what I came to ask you. I can only stop a minute because I must get back."

The girls related all that had befallen since they had last seen him and showed him the note which had been received from the kidnappers.

"Of course you've told the police about this?" he demanded.

"No, I don't dare," Enid explained. "I'm certain that if the authorities interfere in any way, my father will be made to suffer. I intend to turn over the Zudi Drum Bowl as they request."

"But Enid—"

"No, please don't try to make me go against my judgment. Capture of the kidnappers is a secondary question with me. My only purpose is to secure Father's release."

Madge sent Rex a glance which warned him that he would only upset Enid by arguing further with her. Reluctantly, he permitted the subject to drop.

"The Zudi Drum is at our summer home in Bay City," Enid went on. "I must get there somehow. I was wondering if—"

"Let me take you," Rex broke in. "We can make the trip in a few hours with the amphibian."

"Oh, I was hoping you'd suggest it! When can we start?"

"I can't go today because my plane is having a few minor repairs made. How about tomorrow?"

Enid instantly agreed and it was decided that the three should start after breakfast the following day. Soon after final plans had been made, Rex announced that he must hurry back to the mainland.

"Mind if I ride along?" Madge asked quickly. "I haven't written a word to my aunt or uncle since I left Loon Lake, and I think I'll send them a telegram telling them I arrived safely."

Rex promptly extended a hearty invitation and Madge went to the cabin for her hat. Before going back on deck she carefully placed the jade pin in her purse.

Enid insisted that she was too tired to make another trip to the city, and Madge did not urge her. While she would have greatly enjoyed her chum's companionship, she was looking forward to a private talk with Rex. Then too, she had a special mission in Cheltham Bay which

she felt she could attend to much better alone.

Rex helped her into the motor boat and Enid watched until they were well away from the yacht. Before Madge could bring up the subject which was foremost in her mind, Rex spoke.

"I think Enid is making a serious mistake not to tell the police about that note. We can't let her go to Cedar Point alone. Why, anything might happen to her."

"We must prevent it if we can," Madge returned quietly. "But just how can it be managed?"

"We might go to the police ourselves with the story."

"No, that wouldn't do. Enid would never forgive us. And if harm should befall her father, we'd be largely responsible."

"Then, I don't see what we can do. Unless we strand her tomorrow at Bay City! I might pretend the amphibian broke down."

Madge considered this suggestion a minute before shaking her head.

"I'm afraid that won't do either. Enid would simply go wild. And such a scheme might ruin all chances of ever finding Mr. Burnett. No, we must think up a better plan. We'll have another day to consider it."

"I'd be glad to go to Cedar Point myself if Enid would permit it."

"We'll find some way, Rex. But it won't be easy, for Enid is set upon obeying those kidnappers to the letter. We must protect her against herself."

The motor boat coasted in to a landing and was made fast. Madge thanked Rex and said goodbye to him at the wharf. From his directions, she easily made her way to the telegraph office.

She sat down at a desk and hastily scribbled a message to her Aunt Maude and Uncle George Brady, assuring them of her safe arrival at Cheltham Bay. She signed her name in full, and as she handed the telegram to the clerk in charge, he looked up in surprise.

"Just a minute, Miss," he said, "I believe a message for you just came in. I'll see if it has left the office."

He returned a minute later, handing her a sheet of paper. Madge eagerly scanned the typewritten message which to her astonishment was from Jack French.

"LEARNED OF BURNETT KIDNAPPING THROUGH NEWSPAPERS. CAN I HELP? VACATION STARTS TWENTY-SEVENTH. FREE TO COME."

"If that isn't just like him!" she thought. "You can always depend on Jack when there's trouble

on hand. I do wish he were here! Well, why not? He said before I left he might come to Cheltham Bay, and surely this is the psychological time."

She snatched up a form from the desk and after some difficulty composed a message which satisfied her. She paid for both telegrams, a rather large sum since she had not been sparing of words, and after inquiring the name of a reliable jeweler, left the office.

She walked slowly up the street and presently came to the firm of Dewitt and Prager, which she had been informed was the highest grade jewelry store in the city. The shop was nearly empty. As she entered, a clerk came at once to wait upon her.

Madge felt slightly embarrassed as she fished in her pocketbook for the jade pin. Now that she was in the jewelry shop her mission seemed somewhat silly.

Nevertheless, she placed the pin on the counter before the clerk.

"I'd like to find out if this has any value," she said. "I suppose it's only a cheap pin but I wanted to make sure."

The man picked it up, and looked quickly at Madge who felt increasingly uncomfortable. She watched his face as he peered at the stone through a special eye glass.

"Where did you get this?" he inquired.

"Why, I—that is, a friend gave it to me," Madge stammered. "It was found."

Again the clerk bestowed upon her a searching glance. She had not counted upon answering questions and realized that her answers were not very satisfactory. It flashed through her mind that the jade pin might have been stolen. In a panic, she pictured herself occupying a jail cell.

Perhaps her expression reassured the clerk, for he smiled as he returned the pin.

"I'm sorry I can't tell you the value of this stone. Our expert, Mr. Dewitt is out of the city today. However, I do know that this pin is an unusual piece of jewelry. The carving is unique."

"Is it valuable, do you think?"

"I would judge so, but for any definite estimate, you must see Mr. Dewitt."

"When will he be in?"

"Tomorrow. Why not leave the pin here until then? Mr. Dewitt has made a special study of jade and I think he may have something interesting to tell you about your stone."

Madge debated for a minute and finally decided to leave the pin. It would be safer in the hands of the jeweler than in her pocketbook, she reasoned, and until she had definite information concerning the stone, she did not wish to risk losing it.

She promised that she would call again the fol-

lowing day and left the shop. Returning to the waterfront she looked about for a boatman to take her to *The Flora.*

"I hope I see that same man again," she thought.

She passed by several boatmen who offered their services and even idled about the wharf for ten minutes, but caught no glimpse of the person she sought.

"He seems to have a way of vanishing when I'm looking for him," she told herself. "Oh, well, if my suspicions concerning that jade pin are correct, I'll go after him in earnest. I do wonder if he is deliberately avoiding me?"

For the present, she was forced to abandon the idea of finding him. She engaged another man who agreed to take her to *The Flora* for a nominal fee.

As they rowed for the yacht, her thoughts were chiefly concerned with the jade pin.

"I wonder what Mr. Dewitt will tell me when I go back tomorrow?" she mused. "I hope it will be something that will help Enid."

## CHAPTER X

### *Uninvited Visitors*

Rex did not forget his promise to take Enid to her home at Bay City. Soon after breakfast the following morning, he swooped down out of the sky with his amphibian, landing a short distance from the yacht as the bay was very rough. The girls had one of the sailors take them out to the plane in the motor boat.

"The old bus is loaded with gas and rarin' to go," Rex declared, helping them into the cockpit.

"What do you think about the weather?" Madge inquired somewhat anxiously.

"Oh, we'll make it all right," he returned without concern. "According to the airport weather report we may run into a storm before we reach Bay City, but it probably won't amount to much."

"You take your storms casually," Madge smiled. "Remember, we're not seasoned to it the way you are."

"There's nothing to be afraid of," he assured her. "We'll not have any trouble unless it is in taking off. The water is pretty rough this morning."

As soon as the girls were comfortably settled in the cockpit, he accelerated the engine and they were off. The amphibian moved slowly at first, then with increasing speed. As it planed over the waves, the bow had a tendency to drop into the following trough and Rex was kept busy trying to prevent it nosing in. Once before flying speed was gained, the waves threw the plane a little way into the air. While the girls caught their breath in fear, Rex acted instinctively. He minimized the stall and as the nose dropped, pulled back the stick to level out.

Madge and Enid breathed easier when the amphibian finally shook her wings free from the bay and smoothly climbed. They gazed down over the cockpit, distinguishing *The Flora* which seemed a mere speck on the water.

It was impossible to talk against the roar of the wind and the motor, so the girls enjoyed the scenery to the fullest measure. Although they followed a water route, seldom were they out of sight of land.

Before they had been in the air an hour, Madge noticed that they were running into heavy clouds. Rex too, studied the sky a trifle anxiously though he flashed the girls a reassuring smile. Soon the little plane was hemmed in. A sudden gust of wind sent the ship careening to a dizzy angle.

A flash of jagged lightning cracked across the black void beyond the propeller. Rex put the plane into a steep climb in an attempt to get above the storm.

For an endless minute it seemed that the clouds were everywhere. Then the plane rose above them into the warm sunlight. The girls looked down, gazing upon a solid floor of clouds. They felt snug in the cockpit and enjoyed watching nature's fireworks from a safe gallery seat.

For a time they flew blind. Presently they saw a break in the clouds and plunged down to find themselves beyond the storm center. The air was choppy and now and then the ship made dizzy drops. Fortunately, neither of the girls were troubled with air sickness though Enid was not sorry when Bay City was sighted ahead.

Approaching the beach, Rex throttled the motor and sent the amphibian into a glide. It rapidly lost speed, "stalled" a few inches above the water and settled upon the surface with scarcely a jolt, skimming slowly toward shore. Rex held the nose high for the water was still rough.

As the plane came in, two airport attendants waded out and grasped the wings, steadying the ship until Rex brought it to a standstill. Arrangements were made to have the plane refueled, and then the three friends left the field. A taxicab

carried them to the Burnett summer home at the edge of the city.

They dismissed the driver at the huge iron gate which marked the entrance of the grounds, telling him to return for them in an hour.

"Our caretaker should be around here somewhere," Enid said. "I imagine we're locked out."

Rex rattled the gate and to his surprise it opened. They entered the grounds.

"What a beautiful estate!" Madge exclaimed admiringly.

Enid did not share her enthusiasm for she was looking at the untrimmed grass, the weedy flower beds, the scraggy hedge.

"It doesn't look as though the place has been touched in weeks. Wait until I find that caretaker! He thinks he can shirk just because we're away."

She walked determinedly up the gravel path, Madge and Rex following. Enid rapped firmly on the front door but there was no response.

"He must be somewhere around the grounds," she declared. "I'll use my own key."

"Perhaps the door is unlocked," Madge suggested.

Enid turned the knob and to her surprise the door opened. She stepped aside to permit the others to enter.

"Why, look what has happened!" Madge, who was the first to cross the threshold, cried. "The place is all upset!"

It was obvious that the Burnett living room had been ransacked. Shelves had been emptied of their contents, furniture moved, objects littered over the floor.

"It looks as though we've been robbed," Enid said quietly, surveying the wreckage. "It's a foregone conclusion, everything of value is missing, but we may as well look around."

They went from one room to the other. While everything appeared to have been disturbed, silverware, valuable paintings and rugs had not been taken. In fact, Enid could not find that anything actually was missing.

"I'm afraid to go to Father's room," she confessed. "He keeps his most treasured art pieces there, and I know they'll be gone."

She led the way upstairs and flung open the door of her father's chamber.

"I knew it!" she exclaimed. "Just look at the place!"

A valuable vase lay upon the floor, smashed into bits. Books had been torn from the wall cases and various articles of curious design were scattered about.

"At least they didn't take everything," Madge

commented. "Can you tell what is missing, Enid?"

"Not without taking a complete inventory. Some of Father's most valued antiques are here though. I can't understand it."

"Perhaps your trusted caretaker has skipped out with some of the things he most fancied," Rex suggested.

Enid's face tightened.

"Wait until I find him! He's responsible for this, although I have no thought that he actually took the things. More than likely he simply went away and left the house unguarded, thinking that we would never know the difference."

"Have you employed him long?" Rex asked.

"No, Father engaged him only the week before we left here."

Madge had been moving slowly about the room, examining the many objects scattered about. She saw old clocks, odd pieces of jewelry, grotesque vases, and articles from nearly every country.

"It's peculiar that all these things were left," she mused aloud. "I wonder what the thief was after? Enid, where is the Zudi Drum Bowl?"

In the excitement, Enid had entirely forgotten the one object of most importance. Her face disclosed her chagrin.

"Why, I expected to find it here in Father's room."

"Then it must be gone. At least I haven't seen anything that resembles the description you gave me."

"Oh, if it's been taken, what in the world shall I do?"

"It may be here," Madge comforted. "We haven't thoroughly searched yet."

They hastily straightened the room, returning many of the antiques to their shelves. While they looked in every conceivable place, the Zudi Drum Bowl was not found. At length, Enid sank down in a chair, burying her face in her hands.

"Oh, it's no use. I know it's gone! That's why nothing else was taken. The thieves were after the Zudi Drum."

Rex tried to cheer her but with poor success.

"That drum seems to be in great demand," Madge commented thoughtfully. "It must be valuable."

"Oh, it is," Enid responded gloomily, "but I doubt if it would bring as high a price as some of the things that weren't taken. Of course, it had to disappear just when it might have bought Father's release."

Madge remained quiet for a few minutes, then suddenly asked:

"Are you certain the Zudi Drum was kept in this room?"

"I don't see where else it could be."

"I should have thought your father would have been afraid of it being stolen. Doesn't he have any other place where he keeps his valuables?"

At Madge's words, a startled expression came into Enid's eyes. She sprang to her feet.

"Why didn't I think of it before? Father may have put that drum in the wall safe!"

"Do you know the combination?" Madge demanded eagerly.

"If I haven't forgotten."

"Then let's have a look."

With one accord, the three friends rushed for the stairs.

"I never once thought of the safe when we were in the library!" Enid cried, leading the way. "I do hope it hasn't been blown open!"

## CHAPTER XI

### *The Zudi Drum*

IN THE library, Enid paused before a large picture which hung from silken cords on the wall. To the surprise of Madge and Rex, she gave one of the gold cords a sharp jerk. The picture swung back to disclose a cleverly hidden safe.

"I guess those thieves weren't so clever after all," she chuckled. "Now, if only I haven't forgotten the combination."

After a moment's thought she whirled the dials, repeating the numbers to herself. The safe failed to open and she tried again. This time, a sharp little click from within told her that she had worked the dials correctly. She turned the handle, and the heavy door swung back.

Rex and Madge crowded closer as Enid peered into the dark recess.

"Oh, it's here! It's here!" she cried jubilantly.

She reached into the opening and drew forth the Zudi Drum Bowl. It was a queer-shaped object, perhaps a foot and a half in diameter at the opening, the sides of which were decorated with

strange symbols. Madge examined the markings curiously.

"Well, if that's the Zudi Drum I don't see why those kidnappers are so keen to get it!" Rex commented. "I'd take the money every time!"

"I'm glad you're not the spokesman for the gang," Enid returned, smiling. "I'd rather part with this drum than several thousand dollars."

"Your father may not agree," he responded. "That trophy must mean a lot to him or he wouldn't keep it in the safe. I don't see why he attaches such value to it."

"Neither do I unless it's because there is no other in existence. The drum was formerly used in religious rites by a tribe of half civilized Indians now extinct, I believe."

Madge picked up the drum, studied it a moment and set it down on the table again.

"Enid," she said quietly, "why do you suppose your father refused to tell his abductors where they could find this drum?"

"Why, I don't know that he did," she replied.

"They must have tried to force the information from him. Probably that was their first move, then when he refused to tell, they sent you that note."

"That's possible," Enid admitted reluctantly. "Father's stubborn."

"It's my guess the persons who entered this house were the same ones who kidnapped your father."

Rex nodded to show that he too agreed with Madge. Enid did not look entirely convinced.

"I know what you're leading up to," she said. "You don't want me to give up the drum so easily."

"It's your concern more than mine," Madge replied, secretly discouraged at her friend's stubborn attitude. "Only if I were you, I'd be extremely cautious in dealing with those abductors."

Enid made no response but closed the safe door and picked up the Zudi Drum.

"Our taxi has been waiting twenty minutes," Rex informed, glancing at his watch. "Or at least, I hope it's waiting! Otherwise, we'll walk to town."

They hastily let themselves out of the house and Enid locked the door. Hurrying down the path to the gate they were relieved to see the taxi still waiting. They drove into the city, stopping at a hotel for a belated luncheon. Enid refused to check the Zudi Drum and during the meal kept it hidden under an overcoat which Rex donated for the purpose. She was in better spirits than she had been since the kidnapping, and for the first time seemed to enjoy the food that was set before her.

"Just one more day and it will all be over," she

said with a weary sigh. "I feel as though I've lived through an eternity these last few days."

Madge's eyes met those of Rex across the table. She was not in the least certain that the case would end with Enid's reckless trip to Cedar Point. She had hoped that as her friend had time to think the matter over, she would change her mind about going through with the affair, but to all appearances, Enid was more determined than ever. Madge had by no means given up. She had one trump card which she intended to play at the last minute, but unless she found it to be absolutely necessary, she did not wish to alarm Enid. And then too, she was not entirely sure of her ground. A certain suspicion had been growing in her mind but until she saw Mr. Dewitt she must make no false move.

They finished their luncheon and taxied to the airport where they found the amphibian ready for the return trip. The girls took their places and Rex started the engine. Attendants steadied the wings until the nose pointed into the bay and then stepped back to watch the take-off.

During the uneventful flight back to *The Flora,* few words were exchanged. Rex was kept busy at the controls and the girls were occupied with their own thoughts. In slightly less than two hours they were in Cheltham Bay.

"I can't tell you how grateful I am," Enid thanked Rex as they parted at the yacht. "It was splendid of you to go to so much trouble."

"Shucks, I'd do a lot more if you'd let me," he returned quickly. "I'd go to Cedar Point tomorrow night."

Enid shook her head and smiled.

"No, that's something I'll not ask anyone to do. I must go alone as the note directs."

Enid was somewhat troubled in regard to a place of safekeeping for the Zudi Drum Bowl since there was no safe aboard the yacht. She finally decided to keep it in the cabin she shared with Madge and gave strict orders to the sailors that they were to maintain a watch the entire night.

Before the trophy was carefully hidden in Enid's wardrobe trunk, Madge examined it once again. Unknown to her friend, she took a piece of paper and made a rough pencil sketch of the design on the bowl. This she slipped into her purse, and a few minutes later announced that she must go to the city to attend to a matter of business. She invited Enid to accompany her, but the latter declined, saying that the trip to Bay City had tired her.

"I'm a terrible hostess," she confessed, "but under the circumstance I know you'll forgive me."

Madge not only forgave her but was relieved when she decided not to accompany her, for she preferred to go alone to Mr. Dewitt's jewelry store.

"I hope he tells me what I want to know," she thought. "If my suspicions are confirmed, I may be able to really help Enid."

## CHAPTER XII

### *An Unusual History*

UPON reaching the mainland in the motor boat, Madge instructed the sailor who had piloted her from the yacht to return for her in an hour. She then made her way toward the Dewitt and Prager Jewelry store, walking hurriedly, for her wrist watch warned her that it was nearly closing time.

As she entered the shop, she observed that already the salesmen were removing trays from the windows and returning expensive jewelry to the vaults.

"Is Mr. Dewitt in?" she questioned anxiously.

"You are the owner of the jade pin?" the clerk inquired, and as she assented, added: "Mr. Dewitt is expecting you. Right this way, please."

He led her to the rear of the store and opened the door of a private office. Mr. Dewitt, an elderly man with gray hair and keen, alert eyes, arose and politely offered Madge a chair opposite his desk.

"I shouldn't have taken your time," Madge began apologetically, "but one of your salesmen

said he thought you might be interested in my pin. I don't suppose it is really jade."

"Indeed it is," the jeweler assured her. "A small stone but one of the most perfect I have ever seen. May I ask how it came into your possession?"

Madge explained that the pin had been found but did not mention under what circumstance.

"You have made no attempt to find the owner?"

"I thought I'd come to you first."

"You did quite right," he assured her. "In fact, I intended to warn you against advertising in the paper. This pin is valuable and you must be very cautious in seeking its owner. Perhaps you are acquainted with the stone's history."

"No," Madge responded eagerly, "what can you tell me of it?"

"It is the carven symbol upon the stone which makes it so interesting. I believe it to be the mark of a fanatical religious sect which at one time was known to exist in India."

"Not—Zudi worshipers?" Madge questioned.

"Yes," the jeweler acknowledged, surprised, "the sect is no longer active, to all accounts. It is odd that the pin which years ago doubtlessly belonged to one of the members, should turn up in this country. If the owner is located I should like very much to question him."

"You may be sure I'll not leave a stone unturned in attempting to find the person who lost it," Madge declared. "I think perhaps I know who it was."

She opened her purse and took out the paper upon which she had made a rough sketch of the symbol used on the Zudi Drum Bowl. She offered it to the jeweler.

"Would you say that the two symbols are alike?" she asked.

"There is a striking similarity. Yes, in my opinion they are the same."

Madge nodded in satisfaction. She now had all the information that she required for her case. There no longer was any doubt in her mind as to the owner of the jade pin. She was of the opinion that it belonged either to the boatman who had rowed her to *The Flora* on the day of her arrival at Cheltham Bay, or else to a fellow member of the fanatical Zudi sect.

In only one particular did she feel that her theory fell short. Mr. Dewitt had said that the sect no longer existed, and Enid held the same opinion.

"They both may be mistaken," she thought. As soon as she reached the yacht she planned to lay all the facts before her chum, confident that she would then see the folly of trying to deal single handed with her father's abductors.

Madge divined that Mr. Dewitt intended to ask questions concerning her knowledge of the strange Zudi symbols. Since she was not ready to answer them, she hastily arose.

"If you wish, we will keep the stone here in our vaults until you claim it," the jeweler offered.

Madge was glad to accept the offer for she had no immediate use for the jade pin, and hesitated to be responsible for its safety. She thanked the jeweler for his kindness and left the store.

As she walked slowly toward the waterfront she considered the information gleaned from the interview. Had she felt free to do so, she would have gone directly to the police with her findings.

"I promised I wouldn't bring them into it again," she thought, "so before doing anything I must consult Enid. I'm sure she'll see my viewpoint now."

Aboard *The Flora* an hour later, she reported in detail her talk with Mr. Dewitt. And to her deep chagrin, she encountered stubborn resistance from Enid.

"No, I don't feel that it's a case for the police," she insisted. "What have they done so far? Nothing at all."

"But the situation is different now," Madge explained patiently. "Do you realize that you're not dealing with an ordinary band of kidnappers?

You're negotiating with a group of fanatics—or at least that's my opinion. You can't trust them."

"You may be right," Enid admitted wearily, "but at any rate they're only after the Zudi Drum. When I turn it over to them, they'll be satisfied."

Madge realized that her arguments were making not the slightest impression upon her chum. In her intense desire to aid her father, Enid had lost sight of everything save the main objective.

"If you won't give up the idea of going to Cedar Point, then at least permit Rex or me to go with you," Madge pleaded.

Enid grasped her friend's hand and squeezed it gratefully.

"It's noble of you to offer, but of course I shan't accept."

Madge gave up. Until now she had hoped that she could find some means of convincing Enid of the mistake she was making. She considered ignoring her promise and taking the matter to the police, but loyalty would scarcely permit that. She told herself she must find some other way.

"I wish Jack French would hurry and arrive if he's actually decided to come," she thought. "He would know what to do."

Since she had sent off her telegram to Loon Lake, she had received no reply and she knew that

in the present situation she must depend upon her own ingenuity. In vain she cudgeled her brain for some scheme which would secure Mr. Burnett's release and at the same time not endanger Enid.

"It's a shame to hand over the Zudi Drum Bowl without making the slightest attempt to save it," she mused. "Mr. Burnett must value it highly or he would have given it to the kidnappers of his own accord."

Supper time found her still turning the matter over in her mind. She was unusually quiet during the meal, but Enid did not notice. Neither ate a great deal although Jose had made a special effort to serve appetizing dishes. After they had finished, they sat out on the deck, watching the sunset.

Later in the evening, Rex drew alongside the yacht in his motor boat and was invited to come aboard. He had no news to report, and after Madge had talked with him a few minutes, she left him alone with Enid and went back to her deck chair.

For some time she sat there, staring intently toward the city, and yet completely unaware of the twinkling lights or the orchestra music which came faintly over the water from a beach front hotel. Then suddenly she straightened.

"Why didn't I think of it before?" she asked herself jubilantly. "Rex will help me I'm sure! If only I can manage to talk with him when Enid isn't around!"

She immediately sought her two friends, but the opportunity she awaited did not come. Madge had begun to fear that she would never have a chance to speak privately with Rex when Enid announced that she was cold. Excusing herself, she went to her cabin for a coat.

In a few brief sentences, Madge explained the situation to Rex but there was no time to tell him of her plan, for they could hear Enid returning.

"I'll tell you more tomorrow!" Madge whispered. "There's just one thing you must do. Get another bowl the same size as the Zudi Drum and smuggle it aboard before nightfall. Remember how much is at stake, and don't fail!"

## CHAPTER XIII

### *A Clever Substitute*

ALTHOUGH Madge depended upon Rex to help her carry through her scheme, she knew that luck must favor them or they would fail. In part, her plan consisted of substituting for the Zudi Drum an inexpensive bowl of the same size.

Enid had carefully laid her plans. She intended to take the motor boat to Cedar Point, leaving in ample time to arrive at the designated meeting place by midnight.

Yet, as the actual day arrived, her courage began to fail. It was not difficult for Madge to persuade her that it would do no harm for someone to accompany her at least a portion of the way.

"If you come, you must stay in the boat," Enid insisted. "I must go alone to meet the kidnappers."

Madge did not press the point for she had gained her main object. Another detail remained to be arranged to her satisfaction. She pointed out that it would be wise to wrap the Zudi Drum.

Enid did not clearly follow this line of thought, but she offered no objection when Madge made a

neat package of the trophy. In fact, she was so excited and nervous that she scarcely noticed what went on about her.

The day dragged slowly. Several times Madge went to the railing to scan the bay for a glimpse of Rex. She wondered what could have detained him.

Jose served an early supper which the girls scarcely touched. By this time, Madge was thoroughly alarmed lest Rex fail to appear.

"Everything depends on him," she thought. "I can do nothing unless he gets here before Enid leaves."

And then, as she was ready to give him up, she saw his motor boat racing toward *The Flora.* Madge glanced quickly about and was relieved that Enid was not on deck.

"Did you get it?" she called softly, watching Rex make fast to the yacht.

He held up a package wrapped in brown paper.

"I had one heck of a time finding what you wanted, Madge. I scoured the city."

"Sh!" she warned, "not so loud or Enid will hear you. If she suspects, our game is off!"

He came quietly aboard, handing Madge the mysterious package.

"What's the line up?" he asked. "Remember, I'm still in the dark."

"Everything is working out beautifully," she informed, "Enid has agreed that I may go to Cedar Point with her. This afternoon I induced her to wrap the Zudi Drum—rather I did it myself. I intend to substitute this package for it, and you must keep her out here on deck while I make the exchange."

"And after that?"

"I think Enid plans to leave here about nine or ten o'clock. What I want you to do is to follow in your amphibian. Take care she doesn't suspect, of course. When she leaves the boat at Cedar Point, I'll trail her. If the kidnappers release her father as they promised, all well and good. If things go wrong as I suspect they may, I'll race back to shore and send up a rocket which will be the signal for you to go for help as quickly as you can."

"Sounds OK if it works out as planned."

"We must trust to luck."

"How am I to follow without Enid suspecting? If she sees my amphibian around here she may guess what is up."

"Why not lie in toward shore? If you're watching closely you will be able to see our boat start away. I'll make sure that the lights are burning. Keep far enough back so the kidnappers won't be alarmed."

"Trust me," Rex promised, "if I see your rocket

go up, I'll have the police there in two jerks."

There was no time for further discussion of the plan, for the sound of footsteps warned them that Enid was approaching. Madge hastily ducked into a companionway with her package. Rex maneuvered Enid to another part of the vessel, giving her an opportunity to slip from her hiding place. She hurried to the cabin where the Zudi Drum was secreted and made the exchange. For a minute she was puzzled to think of another hiding place for the Zudi Drum.

"Enid never goes near her father's cabin if she can avoid it," she told herself. "I'll take it there."

Making certain that the coast was clear, she ducked into Mr. Burnett's room and hid the drum under his bed.

"Now if only Enid doesn't detect the substitution!" she thought.

She rejoined Rex, informing him by a significant glance that she had accomplished her purpose. Soon after her return, he made an excuse for departing.

"I'd feel a lot better if you girls would let me go along tonight," he said to Enid. "Or at least follow in my motor boat——"

"Oh, no! The kidnappers would be suspicious right away. Promise you won't do it."

"I'll promise not to follow in my boat," Rex returned reluctantly.

Enid failed to notice the particular stress he had placed upon the word boat.

After Rex had gone, she wandered aimlessly about the decks, watching the clock. Several times she suggested that they start for Cedar Point, but Madge convinced her that it was still too early.

"We might have engine trouble or something," Enid argued. "I'd rather get there ahead of time."

At last Madge gave in to her wishes although she was a little afraid that Rex had not had sufficient time to return home for his amphibian. They went to the cabin for the Zudi Drum. She held her breath as Enid picked it up. However, she appeared to notice nothing amiss and stowed it away in the motor boat.

"Are you sure you know the way, Enid?"

"Yes, it's a treacherous channel but I'm confident I'll have no trouble. All set?"

Madge nodded and glanced anxiously toward shore. The night was darker than she had anticipated. She wondered if Rex could see their pilot light.

Enid started the motor and they swung slowly away from *The Flora*. For a time the little boat plowed steadily through the water, keeping close to shore. Then Enid headed out toward a group of

small islands. After she had passed them she was less sure of the course, and slackened her speed that she might watch for buoys.

"We must keep an eye out for Clingman's Rock," she warned. "It's submerged except at low tide."

The channel was narrow and intricate. Few boats ventured near Cedar Point and Enid had never made the trip at night. She became somewhat troubled as they failed to pass a marker she had anticipated.

"I'm sure we haven't passed the rock yet," she said, "but I'm not very confident of my bearings."

Both girls were now alert and anxious. They strained eyes and ears for a warning of the danger that lay before them. Suddenly, Madge straightened.

"I hear something, Enid. It's a bell."

"Where?"

"To the right."

Enid swung the wheel so sharply that Madge nearly fell overboard. And just to the right, not a stone's throw away, she saw water break over a flat, ugly expanse of rock.

"That was a narrow squeak," Enid laughed nervously. "Lucky you have good ears, Madge."

"The rock wasn't directly in our path."

"The bell is slightly to the right, anchored on

a buoy," Enid explained, "but the rock extends a considerable distance under the water. If it hadn't been for you, we'd have struck it sure."

With Clingman's Rock left behind, the channel was easy to follow. However, it was only a little past ten-thirty so Enid made no attempt at speed. Several times she caught her friend glancing back over the route they had traversed.

"Why do you do that?" she questioned. "Are you afraid some one is following us?"

Caught off her guard, Madge stammered a denial. After that, she took care not to watch for Rex, but once she thought she heard the faint muffled roar of an airplane engine.

It was only a little after eleven o'clock when they slipped quietly into a secluded cove near Cedar Point. Enid snapped off the motor. Now that the fatal hour approached, she found it difficult to keep from showing fright.

"I'll stay here with you until nearly time to meet the kidnappers," she chattered.

"Are you sure you know where to meet them?"

"Yes, the note said on the point by the large white birch. I know the spot well. There's no other tree like it in this locality."

Madge's nerves were calm but she too felt strangely uneasy. The night was dark with only a sprinkling of stars showing between the threat-

ening clouds which banked the sky. A gentle breeze rustled the leaves of the trees along shore. Now and then the mournful cry of a bird broke the stillness.

"I feel exactly as if we're being watched," Enid whispered nervously.

"So do I," Madge acknowledged. "It's probably just a feeling. Still, I don't like this layout a little bit. It's the most desolate place I ever saw. Are there any houses around?"

"Not to my knowledge. There may be a few cabins."

The minutes dragged like an eternity. Several times Enid looked at her wrist watch.

"It's—almost—time," she murmured at last. "I'm afraid to go."

"Then let me."

Enid shook her head and abruptly arose.

"No, I'll see this thing through. Those men are only after the Zudi Drum. When I turn it over to them they'll be glad to let Father go."

Madge thought of what she and Rex had done, and for a moment her conscience troubled her. Was it possible that the substitution had been a mistake? If the abductors were honest in their intentions, then her act might actually hinder the rescue of Mr. Burnett.

"I must go now," Enid declared resolutely. "It

will take me at least ten minutes to walk to the point."

She picked up the package which she believed to be the Zudi Drum. Madge resisted the temptation to confess everything. More keenly than before, she realized that Enid was walking straight into danger—perhaps into a trap.

"I wish you the best of luck," she said quietly. "Be on your guard every instant, and if anything goes wrong, scream for help."

"I shall."

They clasped hands and Enid turned away. She walked a few steps, hesitated, and looked back. Then she plunged into the forest.

Madge cast an anxious glance out across the water. She could see no light nor was there any sign to indicate Rex was near.

"It looks as though I may get to handle this job alone," she thought uncomfortably.

Enid's footsteps were rapidly dying away. Madge no longer dared delay. Moving with extreme caution, she left the boat, and noiselessly followed her friend.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *A Call for Aid*

THE trail leading to the promontory was overgrown with weeds and brush. For a minute after she plunged into the forest Madge feared that she had lost her chum. She could not see Enid and only a faint crackling of sticks far ahead convinced her that she had taken the right path. At the risk of being heard, she hurried faster.

Soon she caught a glimpse of Enid's white dress through the trees and slackened her pace. Apparently, Enid had sensed that she was being followed, for unexpectedly, she wheeled about and looked intently toward the very spot where Madge stood.

She observed nothing amiss and went on again, walking faster, as though eager to be finished with an unpleasant ordeal. Madge exercised more caution in trailing her, for she did not wish to ruin her carefully laid plans by being detected.

Enid walked directly to a large white birch tree. She glanced sharply about but there was no other person within sight.

Madge approached within fifty yards and secreted herself in the bushes. It was too dark to see her watch but she knew it must be midnight. Would the kidnappers fail to keep the appointment?

Enid was obviously ill at ease. She moved about, looking first in one direction, then another, and clutched her package tightly in her arms.

Madge felt none too secure in her own hiding place. She could well imagine what might happen to her should she be discovered. The very silence was disturbing. She could almost feel that hostile eyes were watching her every move.

She waited five minutes, ten, and then from among the trees a tall figure suddenly emerged. Enid was so startled that she uttered a smothered scream and nearly dropped her package.

Madge could not see the man's face but she noted that he wore a turban on his head and knew that he must be a native of India.

"Did you bring the Zudi Drum?" she heard him demand in a gutteral voice.

"I will give it to you when you assure me that my father is safe and will be released," Enid responded.

Madge failed to catch the man's reply, but from the tone of his voice, she inferred he was threatening Enid. He advanced a step as though to take

the package by force. Enid retreated. Then, apparently realizing that resistance was useless, she halted.

"I'll give you the drum but you must promise to release my father immediately."

The man took the package from her, roughly grasping her arm as she pulled away.

"Not so fast," he muttered. "Think I'll let you get away and bring the police down on us? You come with me!"

Enid uttered no cry, but she struggled frantically to free herself. Involuntarily, Madge started forward to aid her friend, then checked herself. Undoubtedly, the kidnapper was armed and likely other companions were hiding nearby. To expose herself might ruin every chance of a rescue. Deliberately, she waited.

"Come along quietly and you'll not be harmed," she heard the man tell Enid. "Resist and it will be the worse for you."

He held her arms so that she could not have escaped had she tried. She permitted him to lead her away.

"Where is he taking her?" Madge thought, torn by indecision. "Shall I follow or try to get aid?"

After a moment of frantic debate, she decided upon the latter course. Slipping quietly through the brush until she was a short distance away, she

raced madly toward the beach. She reached the motor boat and groped for the rockets which she had stored under the seat.

The first match was wet and went out. She struck a dozen without success. Then as she was about to despair, one lighted and she touched off the rocket. It shot into the sky, leaving a trailing arch of fire which disintegrated into a shower of stars and vanished.

Madge tried to touch off a second rocket but could find no match which would light. Fearful of delaying so long that she would lose track of Enid and her captor, she gave it up and darted back into the woods.

At the white birch she found the trail which the two had taken. Before following it, she dropped her handkerchief as a clue for Rex, should he find it difficult to discover which way she had gone.

She had hurried some distance before a crashing of bushes directly ahead, warned her that she was overtaking Enid and her captor.

She followed more cautiously, taking pains to mark the trail well. At one turn she dropped her scarf, and a little farther on, broke twigs and placed stones in such fashion that they indicated the way she had gone.

"Rex may not notice," she thought anxiously,

"even if he has a flashlight. If it were Jack, he'd be looking for signs, but Rex hasn't been trained to it."

It was well that Madge had marked the trail, for the kidnapper was leading her deep into the forest. She wondered where he could be taking Enid and was fearful for her chum. If only Rex brought aid in time!

At last she beheld a clearing just ahead, and reaching the edge of it, dared not leave the security of the trees. She noticed a small, tumbledown cottage which stood at the edge of a ravine. The kidnapper led Enid toward the house and tried to force her to enter.

"No! I'll wait here for my father!" she cried. "Keep your promise. You have the Zudi Drum—now free my father."

"He is inside," the man told her. "If you wish to see him, you must enter."

Enid hesitated, beside herself with doubt and suspicion. Then the desire to find her father overshadowed all else, and she reluctantly entered the house. Instantly, the door slammed shut.

"They have her now!" Madge thought in alarm. "She walked straight into their trap."

For a full minute she stood at the edge of the clearing, trying to decide what was best to do. Should she return to the beach there to await Rex

and the authorities or attempt to find out what was transpiring inside the house?

"Rex may not have seen my signal rocket," she told herself anxiously. "In that case, help will never come. If it comes to the worst I must make an effort to save Enid myself."

Convinced that it would never do to leave the scene, she stealthily moved across the clearing. Once she paused to look back toward the forest, feeling that someone was following her.

The windows of the house had been darkened and in only one room was there a sign of a light. Madge tiptoed across the porch and tried to peer inside. The crack between the bottom of the curtain and the window sill was too small to permit even a glimpse. She could hear a faint murmur of voices inside but was unable to distinguish a word.

"It's possible the men really mean to release Mr. Burnett," she considered. "If they intend to keep their promise, Enid should be coming out in a minute or so."

Then she thought of the Zudi Drum Bowl and the substitution she and Rex had made. If the package were opened, Enid would be involved in even more difficulties.

"I'm partially responsible," Madge charged herself. "It's up to me to get her out of this."

She waited a few minutes upon the porch until she was convinced that Enid was not to be released. Then, as her fears gained the upper hand, she made a tour of the cottage, hoping to find some aperture which would permit her to see what was going on inside.

The windows were all above her head save for the one opening off the porch and the curtains had been carefully drawn. However, at the rear of the house, she found a door which seemed to lead down a flight of stairs to the cellar. She tried the door and found it unlocked.

Without an instant's thought for her own safety, she cautiously raised up the door. It creaked alarmingly on its rusty hinges. After waiting a brief space to make sure that the sound had not called attention to her presence, she quietly slipped inside and lowered the door after her.

It was pitch dark within and the cellar gave off an unpleasant, damp, musty odor. Madge crept down the stairs one at a time taking care not to make the slightest sound. At the bottom she found a second door which opened readily at a turn of the handle.

A heap of rubbish had been left just inside and in groping about, Madge stumbled over it.

"Now I've done it!" she told herself.

The flooring above was thin and the sound of

masculine voices reached her ears distinctly.

"What was that?" she heard some one ask. "Thought that sound came from the basement."

Madge barely had time to flatten herself against the wall before an inside door directly above her opened. The beam of a lantern was flashed about the room. It missed her by a scant two feet.

"Guess it must have been a cat," the man muttered and closed the door.

Madge breathed a sigh of relief and for several minutes dared not move. Then she summoned her courage, and quietly crept up the stairs leading to the interior of the house.

Suddenly she was startled to hear Enid's cry:

"Let us go as you promised! You have the Zudi Drum. What more do you want?"

Unable to bear the suspense of not knowing what was transpiring within, Madge reached up and slowly turned the door knob. She pushed the door open a tiny crack and peered into the room.

The sight caused her to gasp.

Mr. Burnett, his face pale and drawn, lay upon a sagging couch at one end of the room. His arms and legs were bound. Enid stood beside him, facing the kidnappers defiantly.

Besides the man who had met Enid at the white birch, there were three others in the room. Two of them Madge had never seen before. They were

Indian natives, dressed in strange costumes befitting their race. The third man had his back turned to the cellar door. As he moved, Madge saw his face distinctly. It was the boatman who had taken her to *The Flora* on the day of her arrival!

"I knew it!" she told herself excitedly. "The entire affair is clear to me now. Enid and her father are in very grave danger."

Madge was convinced that she was dealing with a fanatical group of Zudi Drum worshipers who sought retribution for the loss of their trophy. How an organization which was thought no longer to exist, had traced the drum to Mr. Burnett, she had no way of knowing. And matters at hand were too pressing to consider any question save a means of securing the immediate release of her friends. From the cruel faces of the kidnappers she read that the return of the Zudi Drum was not all they wanted. They intended to inflict punishment upon their victims.

"Enid, dear, you shouldn't have come," she heard Mr. Burnett say to his daughter. And then to the kidnappers, "let her go free and I'll give you anything you ask."

"So you're ready to come to terms now, are you?" was the cool retort. "It's too late. We gave you your chance and you refused to turn over the Zudi Drum."

"I told you I would be willing to give up the drum, providing you could establish ownership. All this threatening and kidnapping and violence goes against my grain."

"You and your daughter shall both pay for taking the drum away from India," came the solemn announcement.

"Enid had nothing to do with it," Mr. Burnett returned earnestly. "How was I to know the drum had been stolen? I purchased it from a reputable antique dealer and paid a good price for it. Will you let my daughter go?"

The spokesman for the three smiled. At a signal from him, the other two fell upon Enid and before she could make a move, securely bound her hands and feet. Mr. Burnett struggled to free himself and only succeeded in drawing his bonds tighter until they cut deeply into his flesh. He groaned and fell back on the couch.

"Now we'll have a look at the Zudi Drum," the spokesman declared.

Madge held her breath as he picked up the wrapped package. What would he do to Enid and her father when the deception was discovered?

The Indian cut the strings and the paper fell away. A cry of rage escaped him.

"Tricked!" he exclaimed, his face convulsed with anger and hatred. "Ah, you shall pay for this!"

"It's a mistake!" Enid cried. "I had the drum when I left *The Flora* tonight. Don't hold me responsible for something I didn't do!"

The men paid not the slightest attention to her excuses. They moved to the other end of the room and conversed in a tongue which Madge had never heard before, but from the vehemence with which they spoke, she guessed that they were plotting a cruel punishment for Enid and her father.

"Oh, this is dreadful!" she thought. "I can't bear it to stay here and do nothing. Why doesn't Rex come?"

Abruptly the three natives left the room above and a minute later, Madge heard them moving about on the second floor.

"They've gone up there for something," she told herself. "If I don't save Enid and Mr. Burnett now, I'll lose my chance. I can't wait for Rex. He may not get here until it is too late!"

With a courage born of desperation, she quietly opened the door and slipped into the room. At sight of her Enid stifled a scream. Madge held up a warning hand, and with a hasty glance directed toward the stairs leading to the second floor, snatched up a knife lying upon the table. Enid was nearest her and with several sharp thrusts with the blade, she had cut Enid's bonds and set her free.

She turned to aid Mr. Burnett. Just at that moment, she heard footsteps on the stairs.

"Go!" Mr. Burnett whispered tensely. "It's your only chance!"

Madge wheeled about but already escape was cut off. The door was blocked by the three natives.

## CHAPTER XV

### *Rescue*

At sight of the three men, Enid uttered a piercing scream. Madge made a wild break for the cellar door but half way across the room she was clutched roughly by the shoulder and flung backwards with such force that she fell to the floor.

"So you thought you would meddle, eh?"

She started to retort but the words froze on her lips. Distinctly, she had heard footsteps on the porch! It was too much to hope that rescue was at hand.

Then the door was flung wide and two young men with drawn revolvers stepped into the room. Close behind were several policemen.

"Rex!" Enid cried joyfully.

"Jack French!" Madge exclaimed.

She had no time to wonder how he came to be there, for in the next few minutes, everything was confusion. Undaunted by the odds against them, the three kidnappers dashed out the light. Furniture crashed to the floor and an occasional bullet

flew. Through it all the girls clung tightly together and huddled in a corner.

The kidnappers put up a desperate but losing battle and soon were subdued. Someone lighted a lantern. Madge was relieved to see that no one was seriously injured. The police lined the kidnappers up and took them away under close guard.

At the first opportunity, Enid had gone to her father's side, cutting the ropes which bound him.

"Tell us everything," she urged. "Who are these dreadful men and why did they want the Zudi Drum?"

"There are a number of things to be explained," her father replied with a smile, "but first, I owe your friends my deepest thanks for their timely arrival."

Mr. Burnett knew Madge and Rex but Jack French was a stranger. Madge introduced him and he gravely shook the ranger's hand.

"Jack must tell us how he came to be here at the psychological moment," Madge declared, "but first, you must relate your experiences, Mr. Burnett."

"There's not so much to tell," he responded. "I bought the Zudi Drum in India of an antique dealer. I suppose the fellow resorted to questionable means in obtaining it but at the time I thought him reliable. At any rate, the first intimation I

had of trouble was when I received a threatening note, warning me to give up the drum or suffer the consequence."

"You didn't tell me that," Enid observed.

"No, I didn't wish to alarm you. If the men had come to me in a straightforward way and asked for the drum, I would have given it to them, but instead, they tried to force me. I placed the Zudi Drum in the safe at home."

"The house was entered," Enid informed, "but they didn't get the drum."

"I suspected they would ransack the place. They tried to force me to tell where I had hidden the trophy, but I refused. Then when all else failed, they tricked my daughter into coming here."

"I walked straight into the trap," Enid admitted. "Madge tried to keep me from it but I wouldn't listen. And it wasn't my fault that I didn't bring the drum. I can't imagine what became of it."

Madge explained the substitution she and Rex had made, and likewise told of her visit to the jeweler.

"You had the situation sized up correctly," Mr. Burnett praised. "The kidnappers are Zudi worshipers, and are the last of a tribe that for years has been thought no longer to exist. As I understand it, the drum was formerly used for cere-

monial dances and the like. Then it was stolen, or so these men claimed. The order is characterized by a particular symbol which appears on the drum and also on pins they wear."

"It was the jade pin that gave me my first clue," Madge declared.

"How did the natives trace the drum to you, Mr. Burnett?" Rex asked.

"I don't know that, but they were willing to cross an ocean to find me. Perhaps after all, I should turn the drum over to them."

"You'll not be able to do it for a good many years," Jack French observed. "Unless there's some slip, they'll all get stiff sentences in the pen. The sect should be broken up."

"After all you've gone through, I think you deserve to keep the drum," Rex added.

Madge was curious to know how Jack and Rex had met and the former obligingly told the story.

"After I received your telegram, Madge, I hopped a train and came as fast as it would carry me. I arrived at Cheltham Bay and learned that *The Flora* was still anchored in the harbor. I went down to the wharf, thinking I'd hire a boat to take me out there."

"Then he ran into me," Rex interrupted. "I had my amphibian tuned up and was watching the yacht to see when you girls started away in the

motor boat. He asked me how he could get out there and I suspiciously demanded his name and his business. As soon as I learned he was a friend of yours, Madge, I invited him to join the festivities."

"I guess I arrived too late to be of much service," the ranger said regretfully.

"Not much you didn't!" Rex protested. "If you hadn't been along, I doubt if we'd have found this place. When we landed at the beach and were puzzled which way to go, he picked up Madge's trail like a blood hound."

"A blind man could have followed it," Jack declared modestly.

The young people decided to allow other questions to go unanswered until they reached the yacht, for Mr. Burnett was in need of food and rest. While the kidnappers had not actually mistreated him, they had grilled him at all hours and had shortened his rations to the vanishing point.

"When I get to *The Flora* I want a big juicy steak, French fried potatoes, several pies and at least a gallon of good, hot coffee," Mr. Burnett announced, "and you all must share the feast with me."

With Rex and Jack supporting him on either side, he was able to walk. They helped him down to the beach and established him comfortably in

the cockpit of the amphibian. Jack, Madge and Enid said they would return in the motor boat, and before leaving Cedar Point, watched the amphibian take off.

During the long trip back to *The Flora,* Madge and Jack had ample opportunity to renew acquaintances. They had been separated less than a month yet from their conversation a stranger would have judged that they were meeting after several years' absence. Enid piloted the boat, obligingly keeping her eyes glued on the course. She experienced no difficulty in avoiding Clingman's Rock and brought them safely into harbor.

"I hope the Zudi Drum is still here," Madge said as they stepped aboard the yacht. "If it isn't, I'll go jump off the deep end."

She found the trophy in Mr. Burnett's cabin where she had hidden it.

There was no sleep for anyone that night. Jose, the cook, was routed from his bed to prepare the most ambitious meal of his life. The feast came to an end just as the sun was coloring the east.

" 'All's well that ends well,' as our good friend Shakespeare once said," Mr. Burnett quoted when the party showed signs of breaking up. "I particularly want this affair to end pleasantly. As soon as I feel able to handle a sail again, I want the vacation to go through as it was originally planned.

Enid and I will not be satisfied unless you all join us. You'll come, won't you, Mr. French?"

Jack looked at Madge and smiled as he saw her quickly nod.

"I'll be glad to come," he accepted. "I'm on my vacation and have more time than I know how to use."

"Here's to a glorious cruise!" Enid cried. "Now that everything is settled, let's all stagger off to bed."

Stagger they did, and nearly slept the clock around. When Madge awoke it was to find herself famous, for the newspapers, securing the story from the police, had given her credit for the important part she had played in Mr. Burnett's rescue.

She was destined to have a more substantial reward for her services. Mr. Burnett recovered the jade pin from the jeweler, and after conferring with the police, insisted that Madge accept it as a slight compensation for all that she had done.

"Slight compensation!" she protested. "Why, it must be worth a great deal—Mr. Dewitt told me that. I'd be afraid to keep it. When those men get out of jail they might make trouble."

"You need not fear on that score," Mr. Burnett assured her. "The kidnappers have relinquished all claims to both the pin and the drum. They

have long sentences to serve. By the time they are set free, the Zudi sect will no longer exist."

Madge continued to offer objections but in the end she was induced to accept the pin.

In a very few days, Mr. Burnett had recovered his strength and announced that he was ready to leave Cheltham Bay. One fine morning *The Flora* sailed majestically out of the harbor on a two weeks' cruise. Rex and Jack learned a great deal about sailing from Mr. Burnett but that was by no means their major interest.

"It's been a glorious vacation," Madge told Enid one day as they sat together on the sunny deck. "I can't believe it will all be over in a few days."

"You're feeling blue because Jack soon will be returning to Canada," her friend teased.

"I'll hate to see him go," Madge admitted, "but I wasn't thinking of that. When I leave here I must go back to Michigan and school. How dull it will seem after such an experience as I've had this summer."

"School isn't so exciting," Enid agreed, "but perhaps you can stir things up a bit."

At the moment, neither of the girls had the slightest intimation of what really lay ahead of Madge. Her exciting days were by no means over. Just around the corner—at Claymore, Michigan—an adventure awaited her arrival. The

story is related in the third volume of this series, *"The Secret of the Sundial."*

"Oh, well," Madge remarked optimistically, "the memory of this summer may tide me over for another year or so."

She said no more for someone had started the phonograph and it was grinding out an inviting dance tune. Jack came to claim her for a partner.

"What were you saying about memories?" he asked as he swept her away. And then in an undertone, intended for her ears alone: "Don't think for one minute that you can pack me away in moth balls and lavender. I'm like those big mosquitoes we have at Loon Lake—I'll pester you 'till the end of time!"

THE END